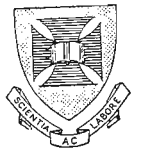

The Puffing Pioneers And Queensland's Railway Builders

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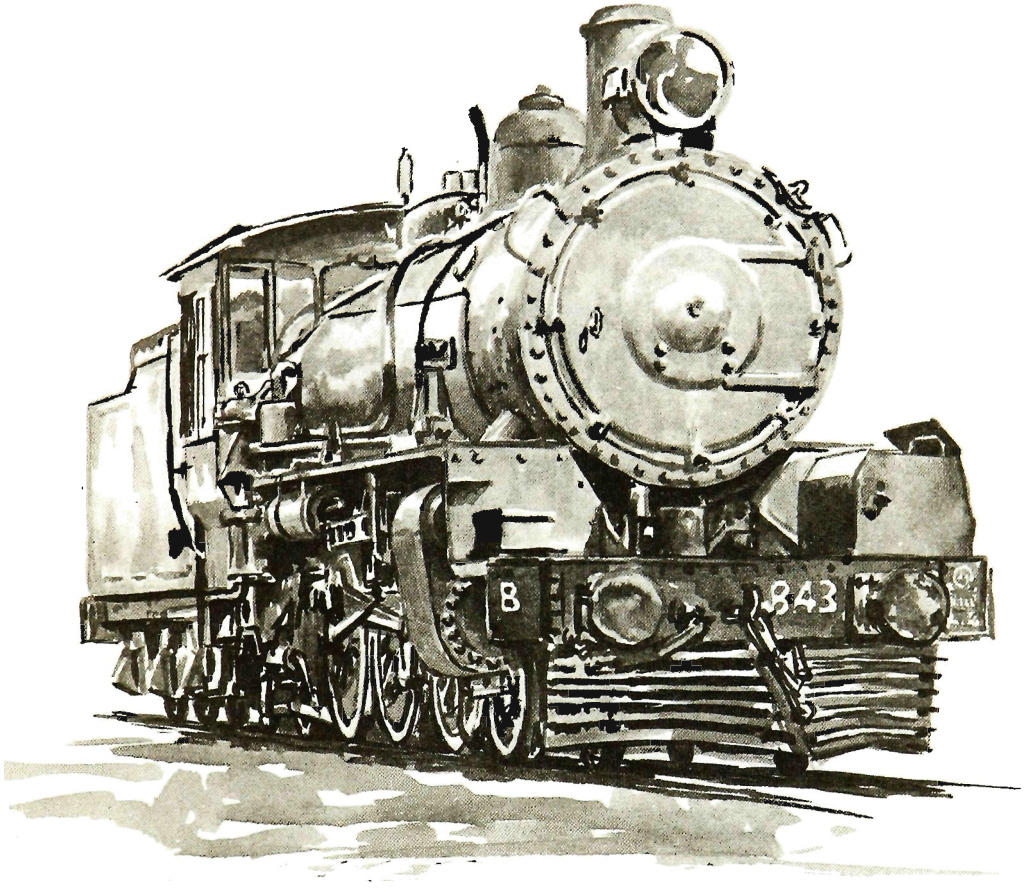

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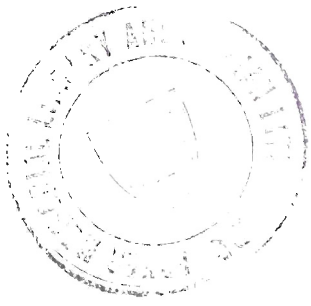

To the knights of the foot-plate,
and the women who packed the tucker boxes

MISSING MATES

Many have gone on their long, last trip,
No Staff or Ticket taking,
The mates who pushed the Locos out,
When the West was in the making.

Over the Downs where the brolgas dance,
And the heat waves wreathe and quiver,
To load the mobs from the great Gulf routes,
On the banks of the Leichhardt River.

Through blazing days with never a cloud,
When the sky seemed always higher,
Straight to the sun was the loads we run,
On rails of flaming fire.

We pushed the tracks of Cuthbert Range,
We climbed the steep Ballara,
We crossed the River Wills had found,
Then on to far Dajarra.

We nosed along with dim head lamps,
While the country side was sleeping,
Or strained our eyes through drenching wet,
When the big brown floods came sweeping.

The sun went down, we saw it rise,
Though no relief from working,
Till half dead minds with fancies filled,
As though demons there were lurking.

Till we'll sell our soul for an hour of sleep,
Or pledge it in some pawning,
When the tide of Life seemed ebbing out,
Just before a dawning.

No right of way or foul nights now,
No need for brake line testing,
You are home at last Old Mates of Mine,
And all of you are resting.

Tim O'Sullivan

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The extracts from poems of A. B. (Banjo) Paterson appearing at the commencement of Chapters 3, 6 and 14 are reprinted by permission of the copyright owner.

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INTRODUCTION: PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

Until well into the twentieth century, driver, fireman and guard – with a locomotive – set out on something resembling a safari. Tucker boxes crammed with food, a change of clothing, a roll of blankets, and armed with a sheaf of time-tables, they worked trains hither and thither not to return home for almost a week. But the passing of time, plus union pressure, brought an end to the need for "waltzing Matilda". Not only blankets but sheets, pillow slips, then later mosquito nets, along with other aids to civilized living, were provided by the Department in living quarters away from home. Few wives took kindly to the chore of selecting and preparing food and packing tucker boxes. Railwaymen seeking board and lodgings in a new depot could receive a set-back by being told "no tucker boxes packed".

Until pooling of locomotives in depots became the order, a driver and fireman had "their own engine", and great was the competition between engine crews to display the best groomed horse. Much time might be spent outside rostered working hours cleaning their engine with kerosene and polishing with tallow and bath brick. So spotless and sparkling were some that a proud engineman would say a clean white handkerchief could be rubbed even over a hidden part.

While miners talked of what made their day, farmers discussed crops and harvests, seamen their ships, and trainers and jockeys their horses, wherever steam men gathered, discussion soon turned to locomotives and the trains they hauled. Like jockeys with their mounts, iron horses with excellent traits were praised while those with annoying peculiarities were criticized and remedies suggested. Methods of firing to get best results from slow steaming locos were debated. Driver warned driver of weaknesses found in locomotives on recent "trips", spoke of developing defects calling for close attention – this one is "knocking badly on one side", that one "priming badly (give her a good blow down before leaving the shed)", another with a "big end inclined to run hot", one with "a lot of slop in the boxes", one "getting down on the springs", or the sloth that was slow pulling on steep climbs to the chagrin of a driver striving to run on time. Things of no small concern when handling a locomotive on a train for a shift of maybe

eight hours straight, or ten, even twelve, and on occasions longer.

Foreknowledge of the particular loco allotted his train on the next job could fill the preceding hours for a driver or fireman with pleasant contentment, or with nagging trepidation and disgust.

Slow-running steam trains often prompted public complaint and provided material for the humourist, but few passengers realized the struggle that, all too often, went on "up in front" in an endeavour to run to time. Unheard by passengers was the regular clatter of the fireman's shovel at the firehole door as he placed each shovelful of coal judiciously to maintain a full head of steam. And, between bouts of shovelling, the swinging of a long and heavy fire-iron from the tender into the firebox to hasten coal combustion. All this work performed on a never-steady foot-plate that swayed, bucked and quivered to a degree dependent upon the state of the permanent way below. There was the slamming on and off of the water injector to control the flow of cold water into the boiler in such a manner as to minimize the effect of cold water on the steam pressure.

With a poor steaming boiler the fireman anxiously glares at the steam gauge needle that persists in falling back despite all efforts, orthodox or otherwise, whilst boiler water is fast receding to the danger level. There is the feeling of a brute fighting back and perhaps the outburst in despair and frustration of "Steam! you dirty big bastard, steam!"

Frequent buckets of water had to be thrown over the coal heap before short sprinkling hoses were fitted to injector pipes inside the cabs. Whilst a light sprinkle of water assisted coal combustion, without the water treatment fine coal dust swirled around getting into eyes, ears and nose, and under clothing. Personal comfort was sacrificed if tender water fell below the tap outlet. The irony of it when running through a rain storm with coal on the tender swimming in water and the fireman's difficulty in feeding more coal than water into the firebox!

There was the frequent, arduous and hot work of cleaning fires *en route*. Ten minutes were allowed at a station for cleaning the fire and filling the water tender; then the right away. In later years improvements took some of the hard work out of cleaning fires, but it was never anything but an unpleasant necessity calling for the hurried man-handling of heavy bars and fire-irons. With coal that clinkered badly, there was added work in removing it from the firebox. In summer the heat from the continually open fire door quickly had the fireman wringing wet with sweat. Right into the 1920s some classes of loco-

motives required the heavily perspiring engineman to enter the ashpit below to rake the hot ash from ashpans. If the ashpan water sprinkler were on the blink, as it not infrequently was, he emerged from the pit a spectral figure covered from head to toe in white ash.

The driver's responsibilities were many. With hand seldom leaving the throttle lever grip, his ears were attuned for the unusual among the customary rattles, shakes, thumps and vibrations.

Approaching and negotiating long pulls on heavy grades called for good judgment in the control of throttle and steam valve opening to cylinders and pistons. It was an art to maintain speed without wasteful use of steam, and to avoid "sticking" on the grade with its serious consequences entailing the choice of one of several, but far from cheering, measures to bring mobility again.

Topping a long grade brought the decision of just when to shut off steam, throw valve lever full forward and run pell-mell down the shut off. Then the steam pickup at the bottom, at the same time avoiding train surge, a most important feature with a mail train of many heavy carriages, or a long goods train. A sudden surge could snap a coupling or, far worse, break a draw bar of a vehicle. This is termed "pulling the guts out of the train", with the consequent nasty job of effecting temporary repairs.

The ever-present dread for a driver was a hot bearing, announced by the smell of overheated lubricating oil. This demanded immediate attention. Sometimes a stop could be avoided, until a station was reached, by the driver clambering out along the boiler side foot-plate to coax along the offending member with lavish applications, in whatever manner possible, of oil, grease or tallow. Whilst the driver performed his acrobatics outside on the swaying, jolting loco the fireman kept matters in hand in the cab – somehow.

A loco in a certain state of repair, or disrepair, tended to slip on heavy drags, or in rain or falling dew. This called for the ambidextrous and simultaneous handling of both throttle level and sand valve rod to control the skittishly spinning wheels. It was not unusual to stick on a grade because of slipping wheels.

A priming boiler was trouble for both driver and fireman for water and steam disappeared at an alarming rate. Quick action was required by the driver to prevent water-laden steam damaging engine cylinder covers and bringing the Westinghouse brake air pump to a sudden stop. When the pump stopped all brakes along the train automatically went into play. Often did a driver hurriedly flog a pump back to life with

encouraging hammer raps on its steam valve head. Constant attention to the many lubricating points of a locomotive, and close checking at stops, to detect warming bearings or any other developing mechanical defects were at the top of a driver's code. The least neglect in this was courting trouble along the road for driver, fireman and guard.

Passengers in those days of steam will remember how, together with wide-eyed children – perhaps timid ones shrinking a little in fear of the slowly panting, seemingly-live thing – they watched with interest at a stopping place as the driver, oil-can and sweat rag in hand moved around oiling and checking whilst his charge seemed to relish the brief titivation before the next gallop. Even if it were into the night with only the sickly light of a kerosene head-lamp to show the way.

Kerosene provided the only illumination on and around locomotives until well into the 1920s. Many were the sheep bedded down for the night between the railway lines that met a terrible slaughtering when shown up too late in the feeble headlamps' beam.The sickening sound of wheels crunching bones. There were times when a mangled carcase became firmly entangled among the undergear of a loco. Sometimes a horse would suffer the crippling effect of an unexpected clout from his iron-clad contemporary. Sometimes one of the bovine breed moved aside too slowly. Enginemen who have experienced the sudden collision with a camel will tell of the momentary belief that an irresistable force had met an immovable object as the loco shuddered and seemed to miss a beat on impact with the poor, heavy, ungainly beast. Hitting a camel was always a possibility in north-west Queensland long after camel teams ceased to be a mode of transport. To this day camels roam wild along the ranges outside Cloncurry.

Down all the years of steam the smoky kerosene slush lamp, sometimes leaking its fluid down the engineman's hand, was a friendly thing, providing one always kept the black smoke-laden flame down wind. Many a meal was eaten in the kitchen of the trainmen's quarters as a slush lamp flamed to add to the black coating of the timbers overhead.

Mention already made of the tasks and responsibilities of steam enginemen by no means tells the full story, and that they were self-taught for all practical purposes, with very limited help and guidance from the Department they served, reflects to the discredit of all Queensland railway administrators. Drivers, firemen and cleaners relied, in the main, on knowledge and experience being passed on from one generation of enginemen to the next – the handing down of tribal lore.

It is amazing that this was so much the method of training for men entrusted with jobs entailing the handling and care of expensive machinery, and with the responsibility, during both lonely hours of darkness and of daylight, of many human lives, a wealth of merchandise and livestock.

On entering the Railways the unenlightened newcomer was provided with a copy of *Rules and By-Laws, for the Guidance Generally of Officers and Servants, and the Conduct of Traffic on the Queensland Railways.* This was accompanied by an *Appendix To The Rules and By-Laws,* a much bulkier manual than that to which it was appended. Herein was set out, often with much verbosity, just how the commissioner wished each "officer or servant" to contribute towards the good management and functioning of his service. Set out were many do's and dont's with penalties prescribed for the unwary, careless or negligent.

To assist enginemen in their particular jobs a modest little booklet on the Westinghouse brake system was issued, but it stopped far short of the full information desired on this rather complex system. In 1923 there appeared *A Guide to Locomotive Men.* A little thing of some seventy-five pages written "to assist in the training of efficient drivers, firemen and cleaners, and others on the staff connected with the working and care of locomotives, and with the object of giving them, in a concise form, the experience of years of railway practice." There was certainly no disputing the claim to conciseness, but the information set out was much too late, and too little. It showed clearly how heavily the commissioner relied upon the established practice of the "elders" among enginemen accepting most responsibility in the training of efficient drivers, firemen and cleaners, in whatever manner possible, whilst attending to their own particular duties. The ultimate paragraph of the booklet urged every locomotive man to "remember that coal costs as much as 3s. per cwt [approximately 30c for 51 kg] on the tender, and oil as high as 6s. per gallon [60c per 4.5 l] . . . and careful men anxious to help the Department can do much in the way of economy in these lines."

In 1949 *A Guide to Locomotive Men* was superseded by the larger *An Enginemen's Manual.* At last the realization had hit someone that the Department was sadly lacking in providing enginemen with sufficient assistance in mastering the intricacies of the Westinghouse brake system for, of a total of 182 pages, fifty-seven dealt with this subject. It contained much valuable information on other matters and

its only real fault was that it should have been available many, many years before. It still placed reliance upon men on the job giving assistance in the training of their younger, knowledge-seeking mates. There was such advice as "cleaners, whilst engaged in their daily duties, must acquaint themselves with the names and purpose of the different parts of the locomotive and tender . . . seek advice from firemen and drivers regarding the purpose of the different parts of the engines, and also in regard to any matter which he feels may assist him in the performance of his duties." On the question of firing locomotives, there was little help in the advice "On account of the wide range of the characteristics of the coals the methods of firing them must also vary considerably; so no hard-and-fast rules can be applied. The best method of handling a coal new to a fireman . . . can only be found by experimenting on each class of locomotive."

Touching on the matter of using coal which clinkered in the firebox, thus presenting serious difficulty in maintaining steam pressure and a safe level of water in the boiler, it assisted not at all to be told that "the method of dealing with this difficulty is best imparted by experience and practical instruction from the driver when the occasion arises." For both driver and fireman it could be a first experience with this so tricky to handle coal. It required practical knowledge of the particular form the burning mass in the firebox had to be kept in as a guarantee against clinkering, and how best to deal with large clinker slabs should they form, after all. It must be remembered this was not dealing with trouble with a stationary boiler, but on an engine struggling to keep running, pulling a dragging train. Whilst the manual provided much good advice, some of it would not stand up to practical application.

However, only a few years after 1949 dieselization of the railway service began, and after the introduction of the initial ten of these alternate locomotives, others followed with a rush soon to supplant entirely (two years ahead of schedule) the old puffing pioneers.

A debt of gratitude is due to those dedicated drivers who, in many depots of varying size, gave their time, usually at week-ends without recompense, to arranging classes where, as self-taught tutors, they passed on their knowledge and experience to the uninitiated. Many a driver and fireman owed examination successes and classification to these obliging mates.

Sometime in the first half of the 1930s the Department provided a Westinghouse brake instruction car, equipped with models, sections and

diagrams, with a full time brake instructor in charge, to lecture and advise on the construction and operation of the brake equipment and other apparatus. The instruction car visited, and still does, each depot periodically. Enginemen attend the car in their own time to further their education and efficiency. Tutoring on the involved mechanism of the train braking system is a specialist's job.

Whilst budding drivers and firemen gained most of their knowledge and practical training by courtesy of mates already classified in these positions, a driver examinee had to equip himself sufficiently to survive a strictly supervised examination which covered two full days. One day was devoted to written theory, the other to practical work entailing hours spent dismantling and adjusting the moving parts of a locomotive, some of which were heavy and some not easily accessible. The driver thus, with a fireman, demonstrated procedures to adopt in dealing with breakdowns on the road.

A fireman faced a strickly supervised day-long examination with written and oral examination. He equipped himself the very hard way by putting to test on the road, with much worry and travail to himself and driver, what advice he managed to pick up from those experienced in the art of firing. And let no one say that firing a steam locomotive is not an art in its own right! A driver burdened with a learner fireman could not put down the late running of his train to assisting his fireman. The excuse would not be accepted, and to so "dob" a fireman in, be his qualifications ever so poor, would bring scorn from the fraternity of enginemen. Eventually, late in the era of steam, a proceedure was adopted of occasionally allowing a cleaner to ride as a third man on an engine to gain firing experience. He was paid for the shift. Union agitation brought this about. Much cramming by driver and fireman examinees was necessary to pass that section of the examination dealing with the important matters of safe train working, signals, proceedures governing the train staff and so on.

But if tasks frequently weighed heavily, and conditions in those days that are now just memories stand out as harsh when compared with today's standards, there were balancing compensations to enlighten life.

The satisfaction, if not actual pleasure, of a trouble-free run in fine weather with a locomotive responding in great style, and feelings of great comradeship to be enjoyed in gatherings of large numbers of men in away-from-home quarters during busy seasons, with lively discussions and arguments around subjects profound and frivolous.

It was a poor group of railwaymen indeed where relaxing entertainment could not be found with yarn spinners (some truly professional) and rare indeed not to find a gifted singer, often with eisteddfod successes. Depots had their parodists directing witty barbs at mates and bosses, praising or decrying locomotives or trains. There were the exciting regular railway picnic excursions, with wide community involvement; a day of well-conducted sport and good clean fun. A depot of any size had a football team, usually of high merit.

Railway staff made up a high percentage of many a townships' population, and still does for that matter. Long did the era last during which railmen were accepted as among the elite of workers, with bachelors finding a very marked degree of popularity with the opposite sex.

For trainmen, required to start and finish work at any hour day or night, to equate sufficient rest and sleep with desired social life will always present problems; more often than not sleep is sacrificed. With shifts of longer hours worked on steam trains this was more so. Two ever-present battles for trainmen, particularly enginemen, were, and more or less still are, against the watch (time-tables) and for adequate sleep whilst living as an average domesticated and social human being. But, when young, who worried about the stealthily embracing arms of Morpheus, when the immediate concern was to flog a locomotive pulling a train towards home and an awaiting dance or the gaiety of a fancy dress ball? And how often did an engineman leave such enjoyment hurriedly to report for work and suffer the torture of the damned whilst working a train through the following dreary hours of night with flesh and numbing brain demanding sleep?

There seemed greater scope for easy-going friendships on and off the job in those days and instant help from mates when trouble struck. Frequent jokes were played one upon the other. There was abounding humour. Recurring amusement and often hilarious incidents – sometimes helping to soften the blows of tragedy. There were the hard cases; wags; and so called dags; the ready wit of many, with quick and unexpected answer for workmate or boss.

One lasting story, plucked from memory's sachet, is that of the bachelor who, objecting to one of the frequent transfers that came the way of the unmarried, got the ear of his commissioner. "But you are a single man, aren't you?" asked the commissioner. "My wife is three transfers behind me!" was the quick, straight-faced reply. Tom Glynn had his joke but the transfer stuck.

And the case of Jinks (name of Jenkins) who successfully twisted verbal advice of "you're on 1 down" into "can you keep one down?" It happened in an appropriate locality. Jinks failed to turn up to work the very unpopular train 1 down and scrambled out of trouble with his doubting superiors on the score of a misunderstanding of the spoken word. Jinks never drank.

Here and there were poets of true worth. This book is honoured by verse from the fluent pen of the late Tim O'Sullivan. His poems received high commendation from eisteddfod judges.

Stories of how one, Pat Foley, carried poetic licence to unusual extremes have become something of a legend in the Queensland Railway Service. His "Death of a Yellow Canary" is typical of the rich Irish humour with which Pat overflowed. It was prompted by the following incident. One night Pat, as guard, took charge of the mail train at Bowen, bound for Townsville. With him in the guards' van was a valuable canary, apparently alive and well, and consigned from Sydney to Townsville. On arrival the bird was found to be dead. Pat was soon in receipt of a "bluey" calling for his report as to when the bird may have died, why, and was the death observed.

In his easy-going way Pat was in no hurry to reply. In the meantime, however, the consignee, a lady, had lodged a claim, in scathing terms, for the payment of £16 ($32) as compensation for the dead-on-arrival bird. This brought a stern demand from the general manager in Townsville for an immediate report from Pat Foley. Back to the general manager went the following:

Dead Canary—train 241 down

Dear Sir,

May the dear and venerated forebears of he who writes this look down on your suffering offspring who is now charged with the killing of a miserable canary. I, whose ancestors twanged their harps, composed and sang their songs in Tara's Hall, for the inference cast I have but this to say:

Shure the death of this bird may not have occurred had his coat been a beautiful green;
But he being yellow, the unfortunate fellow, his early demise was foreseen.
This bird in the van with a lone Irishman may have raised his ancestral rage,
But I cannot conceive, or hardly believe, he murdered him foul in his cage.
And so in conclusion, let there be no delusion, I did this poor bird slaughter.

I beg to advise 'tis safe to surmise he died from want of fresh air and water.
Should my reply seem confusing
When it you're perusing
Don't think me evasive, or hard,
You have the deep sympathy, if of much use that may be,
Of P. J. Foley – the Guard.

There were colourful characters in every section of the Service. Among the hard working, tough living, men on the lengths there were plenty. A report sent to the commissioner many years ago by a fettling ganger in a remote area in south-western Queensland should still be held in the railways archives as a treasure. It read:

Dear Sir,

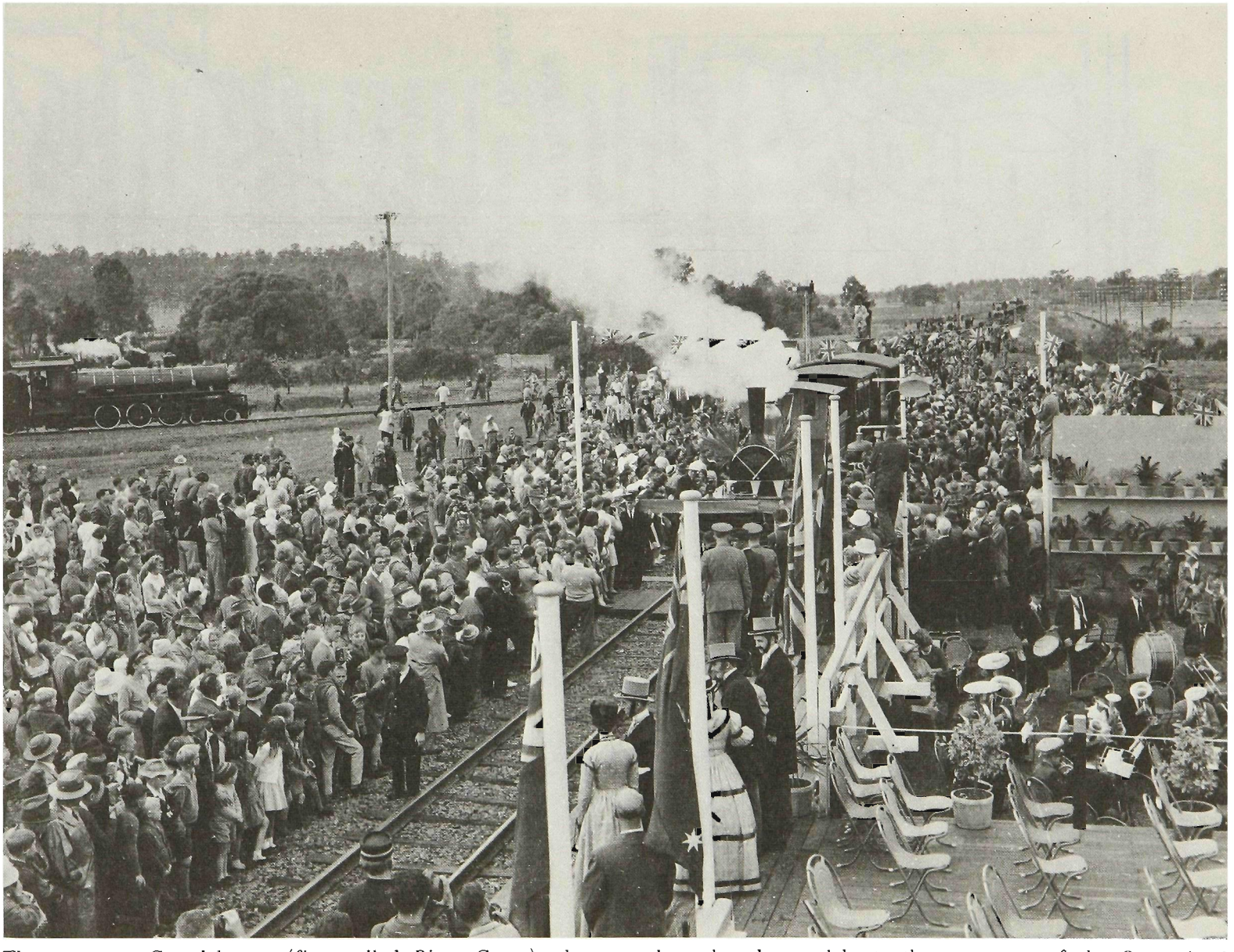
I beg to report that fettler . . . came to work this morning still drunk. I kicked his arse and sent him home. Did I do right?

Your obedient servant

Ganger . . .

P.S. Am sending you a bag of pumpkins on 13 down.

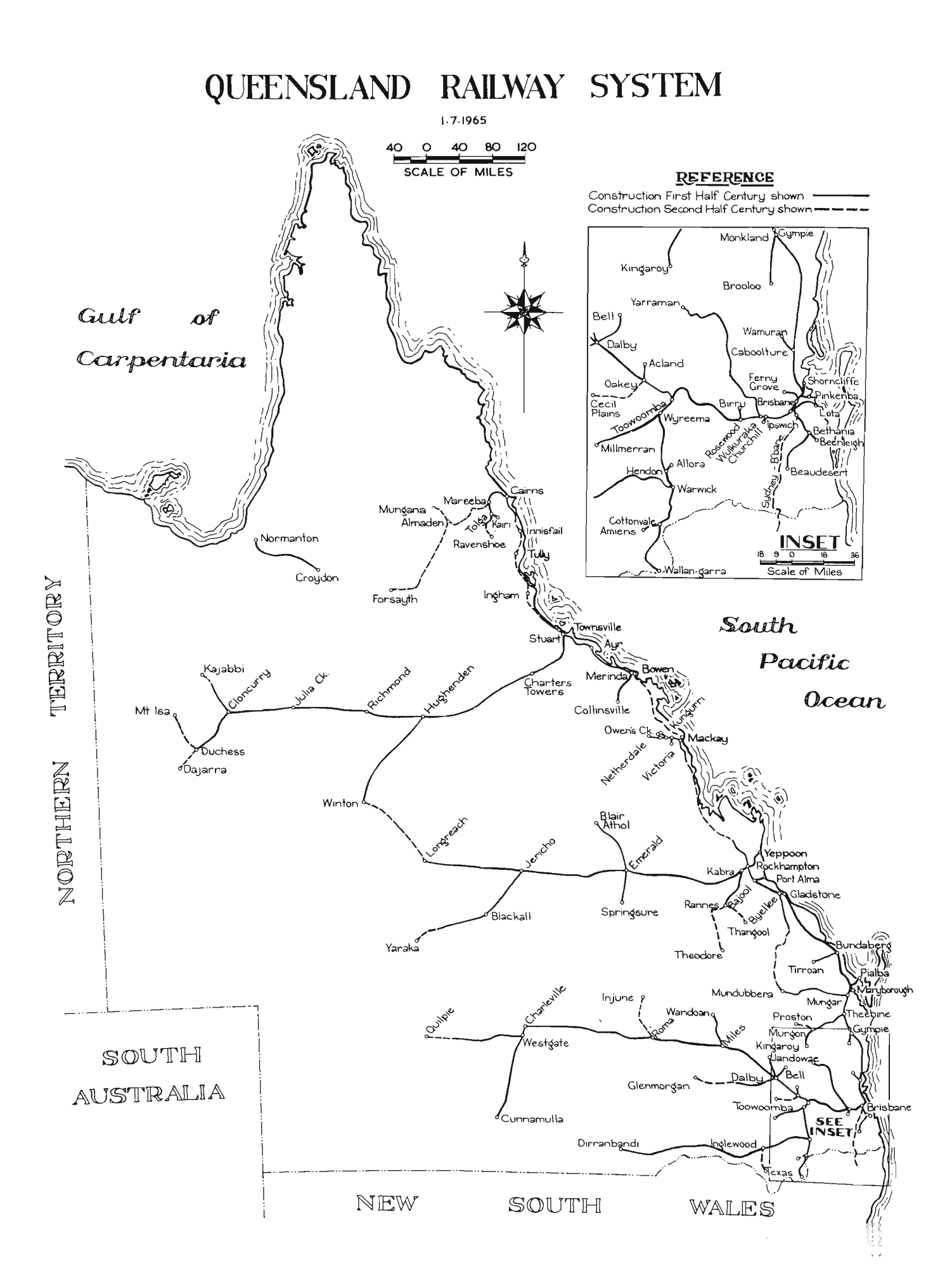
But let us turn the pages of history right back for an appreciation of how the Queensland Railways Service, with distinctive features all its own, some unique, was first conceived, then built and developed on the power of steam plus the combined and continuing efforts of a legion of railwaymen. The Service, with its civilizing influence, like searching fingers, was taken into many areas of the State's wide-spreading lands, to finally give the people a network of over 6000 miles (10,000 km) of steel tracks upon which was built the largest single industry in the State – an "industry of industries".



The scene at Grandchester (first called Biggs Camp) when people gathered to celebrate the centenary of the Queensland Government Railways in 1965. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

QUEENSLAND RAILWAY SYSTEM

1.7.1965



CHAPTER ONE

Clear signals ahead, return to the fight
'Tween tender and firebox, it doesn't seem right
Just you and the driver, and nothing in sight
But gum trees and boxwood on left and at right
That threaten the rails for ever in flight,
Racing ahead, way beyond sight.

From *The Railway Fireman*

In Queensland, railway signals no longer respond to the urgent throaty demand, borne on a plume of quivering white steam, from a locomotive.

The closing days of December 1969 saw the end of the long era of steam in the Queensland Railway Service. The diesel-electric locomotives had taken over completely. Somehow it seems the timing was appropriate for these old servants and constant pioneers of the State to bow out.

More than one hundred years before they had taken over from the horse and bullock wagons, camel teams, and Cobb & Co. coaches, to become the backbone of land transport. After years of great changes and cataclysmic events they were finally condemned as obsolete in a period of highly advanced technology, jet transport and inter-planetary travel.

Their steam-driven wheels turned to help the young Queensland justify separation from New South Wales and shape her destiny from colony to Sovereign state. These locos had run over extending tracks whilst Queensland was welded into the Australian Commonwealth of Federated States. They served the people through the tragedies of two world wars; and world-wide was the acclaim for the contribution by men and equipment of the Queensland railways under the most demanding conditions, during the crucial years of the second world upheaval, when heavily laden trains crowded one upon the other in North Queensland, virtually part of the war zone.

For most of the men who, from generation to generation, manned the foot-plates and the guard's vans, particularly in the early years of development, it was rough and rugged pioneering. Initially accepted as a "pony railway" with its light rails and narrow gauge and a surface track with only a minimum of earth work and ballasting provided, engineers for years warned against running trains at anything but very low speeds.

Nevertheless, the huffing, panting locos were urged along at ever greater speeds in all weathers, through the hours of darkness and daylight, between stations and cities throbbing with life and industry, through lonely sidings to small townships and tiny, remote communities. Men worked in loco cabins which provided but poor shelter from driving rain, blistering sun, chilling winter winds or, in western areas, stinging, chocking dust storms. The fetching and carrying demanded by the urgency of new and rapid development, took trains forever into remote, lonely areas as lines extended and branched to open up new frontiers.

For those who worked with steam – and the breed now rapidly dwindles – there must be some pathos in the thought of the old faithfuls pushed into out-of-the-way sidings, rejected, awaiting the scrap man – long-serving horses to the knackery. Only a few escaped to stand in dignity as museum pieces.

There will be poignant memories of many jobs – some good, some not so good, some truly wretched – as the team of three: driver; fireman and loco; laboured under billowing black smoke and fluttering white pinions of steam along the narrow metalled paths, through scrub and forest lands or over plains, struggling up "banks" or briefly relaxing down "shut-offs". To these men the clattering, thumping, trembling mass of steel, iron, copper and brass that reacted to their efforts was possessed of a distinct personality, displaying strengths and weaknesses, moods, likes and dislikes. Differing not only between classes, or types, but from one to the other within each class.

Queensland was noted for the many diverse types of steam locomotives introduced into her railway system. After the first little puffing billy inaugurated the Service over the short section of line from Ipswich to Grandchester in 1865, there came a continuing stream of differing types which reached a final count of twenty-six.

Four small locomotives actually founded the Queensland Railways Service. Weighting 22 tons 2 cwt (22.45 t) and burning wood, each proudly hauled a load of 70 tons (71 t) on a 1 in 50 grade over the light rails of 30 lbs to the yard (14 kg to the metre). Shipped from England

in 1864, and known as the AD class, each was dignified with a name immediately on arrival – *Lady Bowen, Pioneer, Premier* and *Faugh-a-Ballagh.* From the latter it can be guessed that many Irishmen were already on the railway staff. All four, gaily decorated, hauled passenger trains to Grandchester on Grand Opening Day. Not long after *Pioneer* was shipped to Rockhampton, justifying her name by assisting in the building of the first railway link to central Queensland. The other three were later pioneering with the railway builders at Maryborough. By the end 1865 four locomotives of another class, A10, had arrived from Glasgow. Similar in size to the ADs, but with some difference in wheel arrangement, they were soon joined by nine more. These little blokes had remarkable careers. One finished up with a sugar mill near Bundaberg and in 1965 was still trundling around the cane fields.

The long parade of steam locomotives down the history-making years of the railways had thus begun. Each succeeding type came a little larger with some alteration in assembly, improvement in hauling power, and perhaps speed. Eventually they differed rather radically in features. A new type with boiler elements for superheating steam, was hailed as a revolutionary advancement. As early as 1877 locos came from America to join the parade. By 1889 some were being produced locally, first by a firm at Ipswich then another in Brisbane, and then Maryborough. In 1908 the Railway Workshops at Ipswich built a locomotive designed by Mr. Horniblow, Workshops' engineer. A B17 class, it was lauded as a modern piece of machinery.

In 1935 the one hundredth locomotive from the Ipswich Railway Workshops was ceremoniously put into traffic and named *Centenary.* Two prototypes had been christened in 1914 the *Lady McGregor* and the *Sir Wm. McGregor,* (State Governor 1909–15). These two locomotives were great hulking powerful brutes, the CC19s. A fireman found no cause for rejoicing in their coming as they required him to heave more coal more often along a firebox of great length.

Long before this the "pony railway" image had been conveniently forgotten. Permissable train loads were steadily being pushed higher and higher. Westinghouse brake equipment continued to become more sophisticated. There was a continuing programme of re-laying with heavier rails on the most important sections of track, and strengthening of bridges and culverts. Inspectors rode in engine cabins testing increased loads and gathering knowledge to recommend faster timetables.

One type of locomotive, the Garratt, never seemed to fit in and

remained much as a stranger among friends. Built with a boiler and cab slung between two engine units (two sets of two steam cylinders), such an articulated steam locomotive was unique in the Queensland Railways, although in use fairly extensively overseas. To meet a dire emergency at the height of World War II, several classed as Standard Garratts, designed by the Commonwealth Government, were brought into service in 1943. They were notable on four counts: they were the most powerful ever used in the State; they were reluctant to perform well if not fed the finest of coal; they showed a tendency to derail themselves at crossing points (the reason was never really fathomed); they proved a failure, and were withdrawn and scrapped after two years. The English and French-build Beyer-Garratt was a much more creditable job, and Queensland obtained thirty of them in 1950. More powerful than the Standard Garratt, they performed well and were the first and last locomotive in the Service to give enginemen the advantages of a power-operated reversing gear and firehole door. Another unusual innovation was the speedometer.

But, of all the types of steam locomotives that ran their many miles to give the State service of immeasurable value, the B18¼ and BB18¼ shone in popularity for efficiency, smooth running and versatility. Modelled on the Pacific top passenger type, the B18¼ made its appearance in 1926 and the first seventeen were continually added to until a fleet of eighty-three were in service. The BB18¼ was built to a Queensland post-war design and, like the B18¼, was free steaming and fast running. The final one to go into traffic was the last steam locomotive to be built in Australia.

They handled the mail and other fast time-tabled trains until the diesels nudged them out. Dragging the mail on the Brisbane-Toowoomba run, a speed of sixty miles per hour (96 km/h) could be reached along level stretches. This in the days when a car was considered as hitting the high spots at such speeds!

Enginemen will still recall the rapid staccato blasts from the funnel as the driver, by time-table necessity, crowded steam into the cylinders; the swish of air drawn into the firebox by the fiercely sucking draught within; the vibrating, swaying foot-plate; the fireman, in the fire's bright glare, like a figure in Hades, balancing on toes against sudden lurches as he swings the laden shovel from coal heap to blazing firebox maw.

Chapter Two

They were hard old days; they were battling days; they were cruel times – but then,
In spite of it all, we shall live to-night in those hard old days again.

Henry Lawson

The birth of the Queensland Railways Service was anything but easy. In fact, the unfortunate infant came unwanted by many of the 25,000 colonists who made up the European population of Queensland in 1859. Whilst politicians were its midwives and wet nurses, some among them were quick to advocate strangulation of the newly born.

Governments lost power or were dissolved or prorogued over the issue and fiery and bitter were many parliamentary debates. The youngster survived but inhereted a financial burden that grew heavier each year. And penury has continued to haunt it throughout its life. Only over recent years has the ever-crippling load been eased somewhat.

Like the fate of a too willing slave, as the railway system grew much of the financial burden has been extraneous to its own specific requirements. Many are the private industries that have ridden, and still ride, on the back of the Queensland Railways on the cheap – dirt cheap could often be more descriptively applied to mining industries.

Becoming a self-governing Colony in 1859, Queenslands' first Parliament opened on 22 May 1860 under the premiership of Mr. R. G. W. Herbert, an English barrister who had for a time held the portfolio of Colonial Secretary.

It was obvious that the great resources of the wide-spread Colony, already being quickly revealed, could never be adequately exploited with the transport provided by slow travelling wagons and drays drawn by bullocks and horses over rough bush tracks. Many thousands of pounds had been outlayed on roads but insignificant were the benefit and relief from the fearful conditions of travel. The advantages of railway transport, introduced into other countries, were becoming known.

Premier Herbert and his Cabinet, urged by financial stringency,

hoped for a railway system operated by private enterprise. The Premier, having seen horse-drawn tramways in England, put this idea, with its merit of economy, forward and in 1860 the Moreton Bay Tramway Company was set up. In October of that year an enticing company prospectus appeared in the press. With eleven members of the Legislative Assembly on the provisional committee the company certainly had quality if not security.

Capital sought was £150,000 ($300,000). A tramway to Toowoomba was to be built, with a "thorough network of tram tracks from Toowoomba to the far interior as rapidly as the settlement of population and extension of trade demanded", according to the press of the day. It was to be of wooden rails, but whether 4 ft. 8½ ins. (1.43 m) or 5 ft. (1.52 m) gauge was to be decided. Estimated cost per mile was £1700 (approximately $2113 per kilometre). Commencing from Ipswich, relays of horses would provide motive power with an initial purchase of seventy "horse power" at £50 ($100) a horse, fifty large trucks for goods freight and four for passengers. Horse drivers would number eight, stablemen ten, and four station clerks would be engaged. The leading figure in the venture seems to have been an enterprising person by the name of Sir Moreton Peto, operating as a construction engineer in New South Wales. His representative in Brisbane was Mr. William Coote.

A bill authorizing the Tramway Company to go ahead passed both Houses of Parliament. Generous provisions were laid down to recompence the company for providing the tramway; the taking over of alternate blocks of lands adjoining the line which measured six miles (9.5 km) in width and ran back twelve miles (19 km), valued at £1 an acre (approximately $4.80 a hectare). The company was given an operating lease of twenty-one years. A route from Ipswich over the range to Toowoomba was surveyed. Although struggling to raise capital, tenders were called for construction of the first twenty miles (32 km) of line from Ipswich. As an incentive to investors, it was advertised that half the revenue was expected to be profit, on per annum basis, and a ten per cent dividend to shareholders was promised. Mention of the fine land grants was not forgotten. Rail charges were to be a flat goods rate of £4 10s. ($9) to Toowoomba, a distance of sixty-one miles (98 km), and a passenger fare of £1 ($2). William Coote was put in charge.

However, expectations were not realized. Public support was weak and financial backing was poor. The Government was called upon for help. In July of 1862 the Government, although more or less still flat

broke, set out to purchase the plans, specifications and what little property the company had, hoping to do this with the capital received from the sale of land scrip at a value of £20 ($40) per block. There were few takers and the whole thing was at last dropped. The poor old Moreton Bay Tramway Company struggling to make a go of it to the last got as far as the turning of the first sod at "The Basin", Ipswich, on 12 August 1862. But this was the last flutter in an endeavour to inspire public enthusiasm and support for a venture which, although pretty miserable in content, was initiated with much confidence and fanfare of publicity. By the end of that year the company had gone to the Court of Insolvency.

With this experience of building railways with the help of private industry, Parliament looked at the necessity of financing with loan money, and the question of raising this money was much debated in the House. The population of the Colony was increasing rapidly and in 1863 it had doubled that of 1859. Politicians with any vision realized the urgent necessity of a suitable transport policy being adopted and applied. The ever growing number of squatters in western areas were demanding it, inside and outside Parliament.

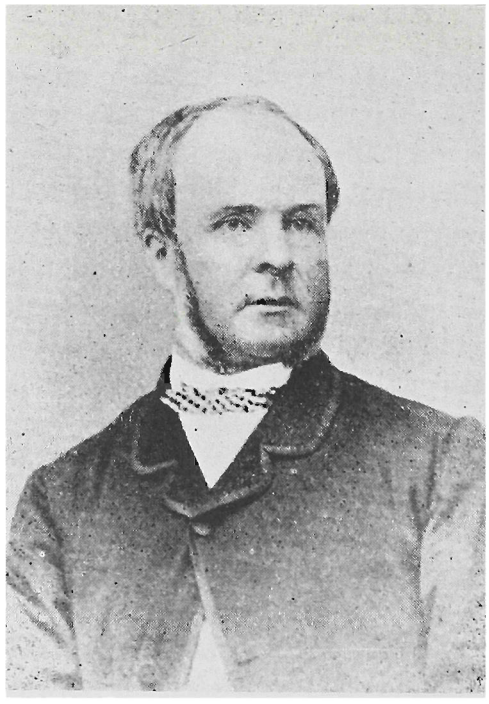
Early in 1863 as the Government was preparing legislation to authorize the initiation of a railway service to the south-west, and to borrow the necessary funds, another offer came which looked like letting the Government off the hook. The engineering firm of R. & T. Tooth & Company in New South Wales put before the Government their proposition to put down a light railway from Ipswich to Toowoomba, Dalby and Warwick, under a lands grant arrangement.

At this time a young man, with chubby face adorned by long mutton chops, and favouring spotted bow ties, was heading for Queensland where, unsuspected at the time, he was to play an influential role (whether for good or ill is debatable to this day) in the early transport problems of the Colony. Abram Fitzgibbon came with a glowing reputation as an engineer with experience in railway construction in America, Ireland, Canada and Ceylon. He was reported to have been engaged on the construction of a 3 ft. 6 ins. (1.06 m) gauge railway in New Zealand when Tooth & Company invited him to come and advise on the construction of a similar railway for Queensland. Fitz had barely arrived and settled down when the negotiations between the company and the Government fell through. The Government would not agree to the terms of the suggested contract which would grant the company one acre (.404 ha) of land for each pound ($2) expended on railway

building. This was too hot a potato for the Government after the furore raised in the House over land grants in connection with the wooden tramway, even though there was fast developing a desperate need for a railway from Ipswich to Toowoomba, and further west, to serve areas where some two-thirds of the traffic of the Colony was taking place and increasing.

The old records have it that there was some "greasing of palms" in an endeavour to have the Tooth & Company proposition accepted. One member of parliament is reported as saying of another honourable gentleman "he says his hands are clean but he always keeps one hand in his pocket".

But lucky Abram Fitzgibbon fell on his feet. He was engaged by the Government to submit estimates for a railway of 3 ft. 6 ins. (1.06 m) gauge to Toowoomba, Dalby and Warwick. It is of interest to note that engineer William Coote, who was general manager for the ill-fated wooden, horse-drawn tramway, had become chief engineer. Why was the new comer, Abram Fitzgibbon, commissioned to prepare these estimates and not the established William Coote? Maybe it was because Coote had nothing but contempt for a railway based on a gauge as narrow as 3 ft. 6 ins. (1.06 m) and at no time hid his strong feelings on the matter.



Mr. Abram Fitzgibbon, the first Chief Engineer with the Queensland Government Railways in 1863, and the first Railway Commissioner (1863–64). His advocacy of a narrow gauge railway led to the adoption of the 3ft 6ins. gauge for Queensland. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

CHAPTER THREE

I served my time, in the days gone by,
In the railway's clash and clang,
And I worked my way to the end, and I
Was the head of the "Flying Gang".

A. B. Paterson

Honoured as the Father of the Queensland State Railways, Mr. A. Macalister, a handsome capable-looking man sporting a thick goatee beard, as the Colony's first Minister for Lands and Works introduced to Parliament what must be recognized as the first dinkum Railway Bill, on 19 May 1863. He was armed with Fitzgibbon's estimates and recommendations.

Poor Mac, few fathers ever witnessed such a laboured and prolonged birth. The Bill's passage was marked by long wrangling debate, suggested amendments and strong and heated opposition from many members. The *Moreton Bay Courier* took a clout at the Bill with the comment that a 3ft. 6ins. (1.06 m) gauge railway would be no more than a working model and "a clever experiment for contractors and miners". Members representing regions in central and northern Queensland, urged on by their voters, claimed that the necessity of spending large sums of money on the railway could only mean the starving of their areas of finance required for public works. There were unpleasant memories of the particularly poor period when Queensland was governed from Sydney. People in the central and northern districts, where development was proceeding apace, called for a postponement of the railway project until they had greater parliamentary representation. An attempt to postpone the Bill for six months failed and ultimately it was passed by a majority of only one vote.

One member opposing the Bill remarked: "The anticipated easiness of commencing a railway system with the facilities of the Government is overated, and the cost of construction under-rated."

He certainly had a point, and Sir George Bowen, not long arrived

in Queensland to be first governor, might perhaps have agreed with him. Sir George had landed on 10 December 1859, to proclaim Queensland a self-governing colony. His was the onerous job of setting up a ministry and parliament, seeing to financial arrangements, and generally putting into functioning order the House of which he was the head.

The first thing to hit him was the discovery that the Treasury held the staggering sum of 7½d. in kitty! And that went off one night when a thief broke into the House – being as surprised, and disappointed, no doubt, as the Governor at the poverty of the Exchequer.

Adding to Sir George's worries was the immediate closure of all bank accounts relating to his territory by the Government of New South Wales. More headaches were in store for him, to become really severe as time passed. Governor Sir William Denison, administrating from New South Wales, had left Bowen, as a heritage of discontent, a Legislative Council weighted heavily in favour of the squatters and other land holders. Denison had divided the new colony into electoral districts that did not provide for equal representation. Thus, Queensland's first and early entry into the realm of electoral gerrymandering was dictated by arrogant squattocracy, plus perhaps some poor advice from Denison's official advisers.

Nevertheless, the young colony with the pastoral industry the only one worth mentioning (plus some agriculture of a primitive kind) – got going: inaugurated a loan policy and began to pursue a public works programme, and an immigration scheme.

In an era when a governor was, by necessity, something more than a figurehead, it speaks volumes for Governor Bowen and Premier Herbert, with a cabinet of ministers short on experience, and even ability, that, starting from behind scratch, within a few years they were game enough to tackle the laying down of a railway system which called for immediate and continuing heavy expenditure. A project which when first mooted and then attempted, engendered bitter and widespread controversy.

Although Minister Macalister had succeeded in pushing his Railway Bill through the House he and Premier Herbert were far from happy with the victory resting on the narrow majority of one vote. Herbert felt he needed a fuller mandate on such a contentious matter. Ridicule was still being directed at the proposed railway at public meetings and in the press with claims that it would be no more than an expensive toy with its light rails, light rolling stock and low speed limit. From people battling out a living in far away places came the complaint

that it would impose too heavy a drain on government funds for something only to benefit those in the southern portion of the Colony, and there was some rumblings in the north about a movement for separation from the south.

It was decided to take the railway issue to the people and Herbert was granted a dissolution of Parliament. In the subsequent extraordinary election he and every member supporting the railway were returned while one or two of the dissenters lost their seats.

So it was back to the Old Convict Barracks in Queen Street, Brisbane, where Parliament continued to sit until the then thirty-two members of parliament moved to the imposing building standing at the lower end of George Street, completed in 1868.

Wasting no time, Macalister re-submitted the much battered Railway Bill on 18 August 1863. This time it succeeded in attracting a majority of three. Authority was given to raise the sum of £1,230,000 ($2,460,000) to finance the project.

In an endeavour to effectively muzzle the critics, the Government summoned a number of engineers, surveyors, and a contractor before the bar of the House for questioning as to the merits of the proposed railway. But the experts proved to be far from in agreement on the matter.

Engineer William Coote, then Chief Engineer, and Surveyor-General Gregory were two who claimed the narrow gauge was a cheap, nasty and most unsatisfactory method of commencing the Colony's railway system. They contended it would, in the long run, prove costly as a useless experiment. But the irrespressible engineer Abram Fitzgibbon talked them all down. He was adamant that 3 ft. 6 ins. (1.06 m) gauge was all the Colony needed – if no greater speeds than twenty miles per hour (36 km/h) were expected. And anyhow, he contended, this was fast enough. This railway would answer all purposes for 100 years, he said.

As a dig at New South Wales where railway building on a gauge of 4 ft. 8½ ins. (1.43 m) had already begun, he said that he would sooner travel safely at twenty miles per hour (36 km/h) on the narrow gauge than at forty miles (72 km/h) on the wider. Abram told the House it was just throwing money away to build on a wider gauge. Rails of light construction would suffer a minimum of wear and tear. There would be no greater speed than fifteen miles per hour (24 km/h) on five chain (100 m) radius curves, and these would be only on steep, slow pulling inclines. Other curves would be of ten chains (200 m) radius, allowing

for the faster speed of twenty miles per hour (36 km/h), he said.

He had certainly done his homework and came well armed for, he went on to say, small locomotives "like the old ones used in England from 1839 to 1840, with some modern improvements added" would be just the shot for the Colony's railway.

Engineer Coote's opinion of Abram Fitzgibbon was clearly shown in a published letter from Coote:

> Fitzgibbon actually recommends broader gauge but at present will lay down only a narrow permanent way of 3 feet six [1.06 m]. No engineer has ever before proposed 3 feet six for a trunk line. No loco has ever been built for such. It is in opposition to the theory and practice of every known engineer, and upon every railway since railway systems began — the 3 feet six is a dangerous innovation in locomotive gauges. One thing Mr. Herbert can rely upon, he will still have to take 4 feet 8½ [1.43 m] whether he likes it or not, if the traffic is worth making a railway for at all. As to his alternative, it is not worth a moments consideration.

Coote was talking from knowledge. The broader gauge was being recognized universally as "standard gauge". England, with assorted gauges ranging as wide as 7 ft. (2.1 m) had already commenced standardizing at 4 ft. 8½ ins. It was unfortunate that Premier Herbert and his Government fell for the dross of Fitzgibbon and shunned the gold of Coote. With railways playing so vital a role in the development of the country for 100 years, there is little doubt that the broken gauge between Queensland and New South Wales has been a contributing factor in the slow advancement of Queensland compared to the other eastern states of Australia.

For years there has been talk of measures being taken to do away with the clumsy, messy, expensive and time-consuming transhipping of railway loading from one rail system to another in the Queensland-New South Wales depots at Clapham and Wallangarra. The set-up remains. During World War II, with the necessity of moving troops, equipment and supplies rapidly from one state to the other the arrant stupidity of broken gauge was tragically exposed. The work performed by the railway staff of all sections at these depots, under the particular conditions prevailing during the crucial years of that war was most praiseworthy.

The boys at Clapham faltered badly one day though. As usual, members of the Armed Forces were transhipping army supplies, including bottled beer and other stuff that cheers. It was a hot day. Only

natural that the boys in khaki found themselves in personal possession of some of the then so precious vintages. Also natural for their civvy mates transhipping elsewhere to accept a taste as they "happened to pass by". Result, before the shift was out almost all of both parties were truly tiddly, much to the concern, and embarrassment, of the railway general manager, the army man in charge at Brisbane headquarters, and union officials. After much talk, and threats of punishment, all was forgiven. There was a war on, get on with it.

The stern fact remains that Fitzgibbon won the day against all comers, crowned himself with glory and talked himself into two good jobs. He was immediately appointed Chief Engineer, and before the year closed was filling the higher position of Queensland's first Railways Commissioner. Never since has there been such rapid promotion in the Queensland Railway Service.

At last the railway scheme was actually launched. The sum of £250,000 ($500,000) was allotted to commence the construction of, for the first time in any country, a 3ft. 6ins. (1.06 m) main line railway system. Adding to its uniqueness, the inaugural point was not to be from Brisbane, the Capital and commercial and financial hub of the Colony, but twenty-four miles (39 km) inland at the small, although developing, township of Ipswich. It was to be called the Southern and Western Line and was ultimately to run west and south-west to the New South Wales border through country in which traffic had continued to flow from New South Wales and, since Separation, increasing numbers of cattle and sheep were pouring in and small pastoral townships were being established.

The influence of the squattocracy in Parliament was the main factor in starting the line from Ipswich, and there was little love lost between the squatters and the commercial element in Brisbane.

In the port of Brisbane supplies arriving were subject to the slow procedure of transhipment to steamers and punts that then made their leisurely way up the Brisbane and Bremer Rivers with supplies for Ipswich and inland. The steamer *Kate* plied regularly while Cobb & Co. ran two coaches each day.

The Government lost no time in getting the railway construction under way. With the indominitable Chief Engineer Abram Fitzgibbon in charge, tenders were quickly called for putting down the first section of twenty-one miles (34 km) from Ipswich west to the Little Liverpool Range. The tender from the firm of Peto, Brassey and Betts was accept-

ed. Sir Moreton Peto had at last secured a worthwhile stake in the affairs of this promising young colony.

On 25 February 1864, with much pomp and ceremony, the first railway sleeper was spiked by Lady Diamantina Roma Bowen, the good wife of Governor Sir George Bowen. Lady Diamantina was of Greek nobility – not that that matters at all to this story.

It was a grand day. Most of the large number of invited guests experienced the incongruity of a twenty-four mile (38 km) journey up two rivers from the metropolis to celebrate the inaugration of their first railway, at Ipswich.

The Governor and his Lady were escorted by a detachment of cavalry, and a volunteer regiment was present, presenting a colourful display of uniforms. A couple of bands played martial and patriotic music.

A long and impressive toast list had been prepared for the occasion, with extreme care taken not to transgress protocol. With the Honourable F. North as Chairman, the toasts, under the heading "Inauguration of The Work of The First Queensland Railway", gave plenty of scope for speakers with:

The Queen
The Prince and Princess of Wales and rest of Royal Family
The Health of His Excellency, The Governor
Her Majesty's Ministers and Parliament of Queensland
The Army, Navy and Volunteers
Success To The Pioneer Railway of Queensland
Lady Bowen and The Ladies of Queensland
Success To The Contractors

The only toast that seems to have been overlooked was one to the navvies, the blokes who did the labouring and sweating, and at times worse.

Did "The Ladies" include those navvies' wives whose husbands, not long after, were forced to stage the first Queensland railwaymen's strike, and demonstrate before Parliament House, demanding long overdue wages from the contractor, and protesting against being unemployed with the building contractor still holding an incompleted contract?

However, the momentous function went the successful way of all such, then and now, with speeches heavily loaded with platitudinous ponderosity, and much back patting. The Governor set the theme by predicting "a fine future for the railway, providing swift carriages

rolling over smoother roads."

However, the one to enjoy this day the most was a lad thirteen years of age. To young William Robert Morrow it must have been the fulfilment of the most wonderful dream a boy could have. He held the first sleeper whilst Lady Diamantina gave the first dog spike a few gentle taps with a little silver hammer. And, joy of joys, she presented the lad with the spike – a silver one – together with a sovereign for his "trouble". The spike remains a treasured heirloom in the Morrow family to this day.

For young Bill Morrow this exciting day was the starting point of a long and outstanding career as a railwayman. He was employed at that tender age of thirteen as a nipper with the construction gang. Seven years later he had become a highly qualified plate layer in charge of his own large gang of men. After years in the south-west he was to be found helping a railway line sneak north from Brisbane.

In 1881 he was railway building at Bundaberg, where he married and had a home in Gin Gin through which the line to Mount Perry was later to pass. It was far from a permanent home as Will was frequently called on to work with gangs miles away because of his special knowledge and skill, His wife, Millie (Amelia), was always with him, roughing it.

Ever moving north, irrevocably bound to the railway, Will and Millie, then with a growing family, were in far north Queensland at the close of the century, with Will working on the Chillagoe and Einsleigh lines. He had then become a maintenance inspector. The family had grown to six boys and four girls. One son, now living in Gympie, tells of how Mum and Dad would back track their railway life by recalling where each member of the family was born, often not far from a railway construction main camp.

Like many others in the early days of steam, the Morrow family was a railway family. With the exception of one, the sons became engine drivers and one son, William, became a Tasmanian Senator, after leaving the foot-plate to fill a leading official position with the Australian Railways Union firstly in Queensland and then in Tasmania.

The elder William completed fifty-six years' service with the Railways before accepting retirement. To a life-time of service he added a leg. As an inspector, near the end of his career, whilst directing work on the permanent way at Einsleigh a wagon being shunted ran him down. He received cruel injury and his leg was amputated. He returned to serve that which had become so much a part of him for a little longer

before ultimate retirement. He died at the age of eighty-three, jovial to the last, as all through life. His wonderful wife and mate, Millie, lived on for some years and at about the same age went to rejoin Will where all fine railway men go.

The Morrow story is told because with only a change of names it could be that of many young couples who married, lived and raised young families, usually large, always within sight and sound of the continuing railway to which they closely geared their lives. Eventually it claimed their sons who took up the railway tools dropped by dad's old and tired hands. The Moleskin Joes of Queensland, without whom the far-ranging railway system could never have been. Their praises have yet to be sung. Their only monument that which their brawn and skill created.

During 1864 £157,776 ($315,552) had gone into railway construction with the work proceeding reasonably well. A number of shell-backed politicians continued their opposition in and out of Parliament, and were egged on by critics in New South Wales who persisted in decrying the narrow gauge.

Undaunted, the Queensland Government had commissioned Sir Charles Fox & Co. in England to purchase rolling stock and other material, including "small locomotives like the old ones used in England in 1839–40" as recommended by Fitzgibbon when, before the bar in Parliament, he used to such advantage the matter of economy, a paramount consideration with a lean Treasury.

The first batch of equipment arrived on 15 August 1864, on the liner *Black Ball.* A group of recruited skilled workmen came out from England shortly after on a sister ship *Fiery Star.* The first locos were supplied by Avonsdale Engine Company, Bristol, while carriage and wagon material came from Manchester. The locos were wood burners, weighed twenty-two tons two cwt (23t) and were capable of hauling seventy tons (71 t) on a grade of 1 in 50. Each carriage accommodated twenty passengers.

Meanwhile the Queensland Immigration Agent in England, Mr. Henry Jordon, had been busy recruiting navvy and other labour. By 1865 he had shipped out some 4000 immigrants to meet the fast growing need for labour throughout the Colony. How Henry Jordon's recruits felt at having the uncomplimentary, and rather menacing, label of "Jordon's lambs" slapped on them is not known now. Although it was not quite lambs to the slaughter, their treatment appears to have

been below the standard enjoyed by many mobs of sheep brought in to stock newly-opened land holdings.

The *Moreton Bay Courier* had this to say on 2 September 1865:

> The steamer "Ipswich" arrived on Tuesday with 220 immigrants, per Naval Reserve. With one or two exceptions all were navvies for railway work. Three hundred departed for Biggs Camp yesterday, leaving three hundred still in the Depot, where accommodation lately has been insufficient (96 single – remainder married). When the last arrived nothing was ready for them . . . numbers had to sleep in the open.

In saying "accommodation lately has been insufficient", this could be an understatement of the sorry plight of Jordon's lambs, the press may have tempered the wind of criticism to the "establishment".

However, the railway construction moved forward. The construction of a hefty bridge over the Bremer River at Ipswich to carry the railway was not achieved without unforseen trouble and delay. When all was ready awaiting the arrival of the bridge material, word came that the unfortunate sailing ship carrying the material had been wrecked. A maddening set-back for the contractor as the bridge connected South and North Ipswich right at the commencement of the railway.

This annoyance was pushed into the background on 11 January 1865 – a day of great importance for Queenslanders. On this day began the trial runs of the four newly-assembled locomotives that were to inaugurate the railway system. *Faugh-a-Ballagh* had the honour to be the first with steam raised. It was trundled carefully from the workshop whilst rending the air with the unfamiliar shriek of its whistle. Crowds quickly gathered to view the sight. Hauling several trucks, a number of runs were slowly made over the short section of rails between the workshop and the Ipswich wharf. Small boys were the railways' original passengers. To their boisterous delight they were allowed to clamber into the wagons for rides.

Track laying to Biggs Camp was completed by April of 1865 and put to use whilst awaiting the official opening. On 25 April many people, by invitation of the contractor, travelled on the Colony's first Railway Excursion from a temporary station at North Ipswich to the rail head at Biggs Camp. Locomotive *Pioneer* did the honours on this historic occasion, puffing ahead of a train gay with flags and bunting.

Excursion trains continued to run on Sundays. The novel experience of a first train journey, on the Colony's first railway could

not be resisted. Religious bodies were not happy and condemned the Sunday excursions as pawns of the devil.

The section from Ipswich to Biggs Camp (now known as Grandchester) was officially opened on 31 July 1865 at Biggs Camp. To stress the historical importance of the occasion a national holiday was proclaimed, and Parliament adjourned for a fortnight. The completed Bremer Bridge was thoroughly inspected and tested several days before. Four special trains took the people to Biggs Camp to celebrate. As the trains passed the Woodend home of A. Macalister, "Father" of the railway, the passengers gave lusty cheers. After the opening ceremony the contractor provided invited guests with a lavish luncheon.

A number of semi-official functions were organized in other towns and smaller settlements to honour the occasion. Toowoomba held a racing carnival and conducted other sporting events.

Supported by his ministers, many dignitaries and persons in the top bracket of society, Governor Sir George Bowen, accompanied by Lady Bowen, was there to declare the first railway open. Of course, speakers grasped the opportunity to have a crack at the knockers of the railway system and the Governor raised a laugh when he referred to the "battle of the gauges". After congratulating all engaged on the railway construction, Sir George was pleased to deliver himself of the following:

> I address a few words of friendly sympathy and encouragement to the artisans and working men who are about to raise a structure scarcely more honourable to the heads that have planned than to the hands that erected it. A cheering prospect of wealth, and fame to genius, combined with virtue and industry is open for them under the expansive freedom of the Colonial institutions.

Chief Engineer Abram Fitzgibbon, a man of many words and not one to allow his light to shine unseen, in a prepared address to the Governor and assembly proudly referred to the unsound predictions of failure for the railway scheme by those who opposed the narrow gauge. "Of the unsoundness of such predictions Your Excellency and all those who have travelled safely over the 21 miles [34 km] of railway opened this day can testify", he said. He was privileged to add "the Government had decided to adopt their expenditure to their means and present wants. And by relinquishing speeds to enable traffic to be conducted upon a railway of the class I have had the honour to recommend, and the inauguration of which we today celebrate."

There is no record of any of the opponents of the railway being

present to project a discordant note into the celebrations, and praise for Abram was unstinted, it seems.

Mr. Doyne, of the Institute of Civil Engineers, congratulated Abram and went on to offer some professional warnings. He thought it was sound advice to adopt the "medium" course in railway building. He strongly warned, nevertheless, that any attempt to work the railway at high speeds must result in disaster. Comparing the new railway to a well-bred pony he said: "It will trot along well so long as not overtaxed and asked to do the work of a powerful horse."

No one took the advice of Mr. Doyne seriously, then or since. As the years drifted along drivers and firemen found that the "ponies" they rode struggled along and often jibbed under too heavy loads, or swayed and rolled and bucked, to a clattering and banging, on the narrow gauge and light rails spurred on by time-tables made ever faster.

Mr. Samuel Wilcox, the contractor's engineer, in a thinly-veiled prophesy of doom for the New South Wales railways, with the wider gauge, and faster speeds said: "It was far better to go 500 miles [800 km] at 15 miles per hour [24 km/h] than only 250 miles [400 km] at 25 miles per hour [40 km/h].

And so, amidst rejoicing and enthusiasm, blessed with the confidence of its deeply-committee sponsors, the first short section of Queensland's railway system, tiny in all respects, was well and truly opened. A modest beginning for a railway service that was to continue pushing its narrow two-pronged way hither and thither throughout a vast Colony of 667,000 square miles (1,726,863 km^2), constantly pioneering as it made the land's great wealth available to the people. And despite those first dire warnings the delicate little "pony" was soon asked to do the work of a powerful horse.

Preserved is the delightful compliment paid the performances of drivers and locomotives on the day of the grand opening at Biggs Camp. The *Moreton Bay Courier* of 17 August 1865 had this to say:

> The great precaution and careful manner taken in selecting men, the supreme carefulness of drivers, and the superior appliances attached to the engines, being the principle safeguards against the dangerous results otherwise to be apprehended from the adoption of such a system.
>
> From the great precaution taken in the selection of men who are to be entrusted with the responsible task of driving the engines it is evident that unless in every case a very steady hand, and experienced man, is at the helm a journey by rail, even between

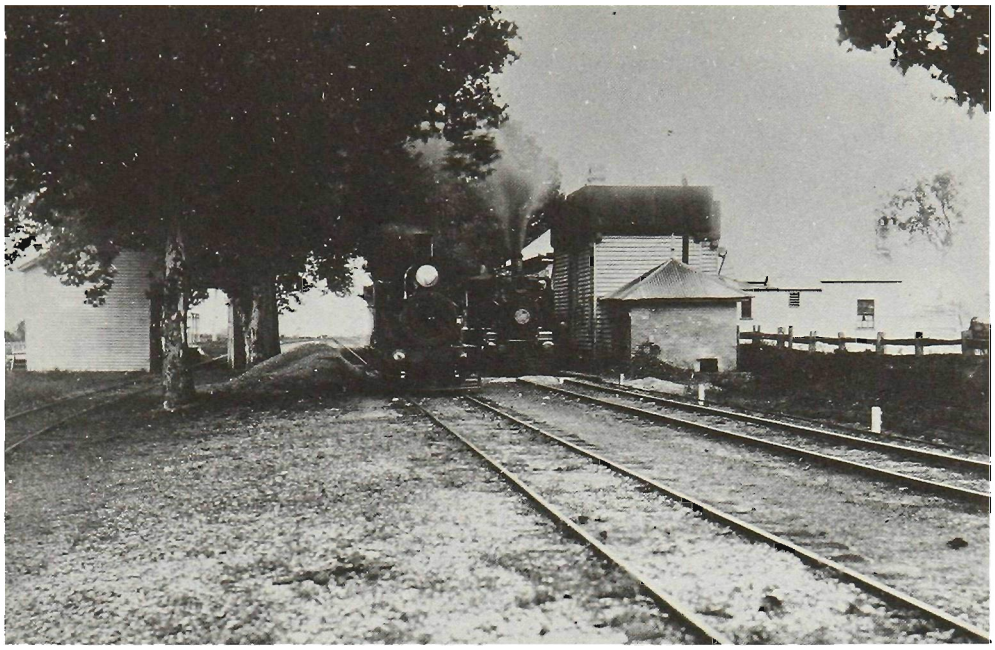
Ipswich and Biggs Camp, would be a somewhat hazardous experiment.

The careful manner in which the driver manipulated the apparatus for adding to, or taking from, the speed of the engine as circumstances required reminded of the dainty handling of a fractious horse racer by a first class jockey, afraid that the animal will bolt yet desirous of giving him the benefit of the whole of his speed while he is on the course.

However, the historic function was not allowed to pass without some public criticism. It was claimed the number invited to travel on the special trains was too selective. The four trains were far from full and more should have enjoyed the happy occasion.

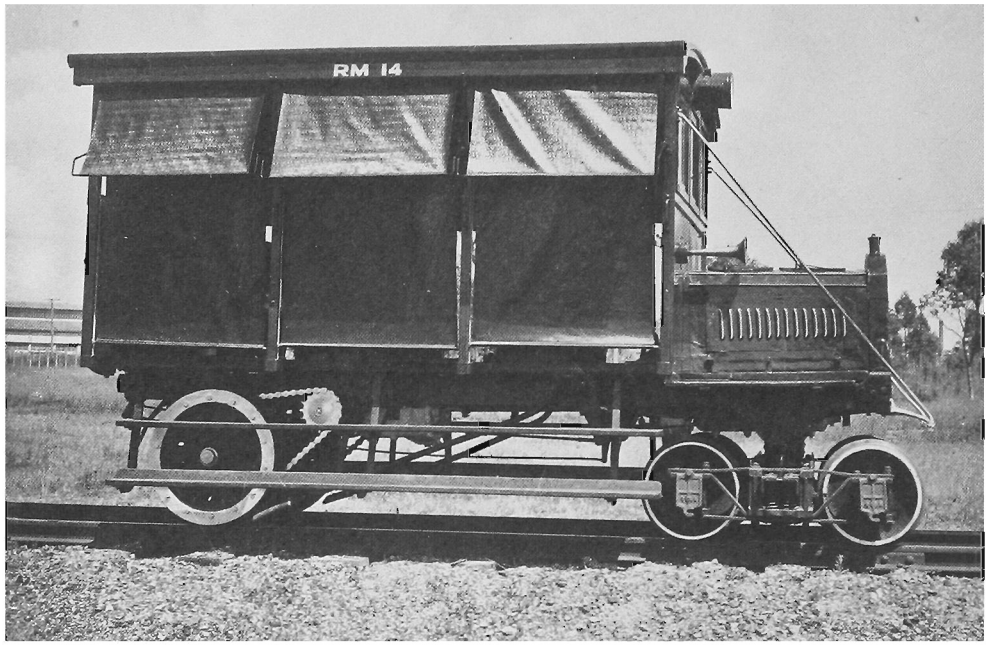
A. Macalister, Minister for Works, introduced the first Railway Bill in 1863. He is often referred to as father of the Queensland Railways. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

The staff of the Ipswich Railway Workshop in the 1860s. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

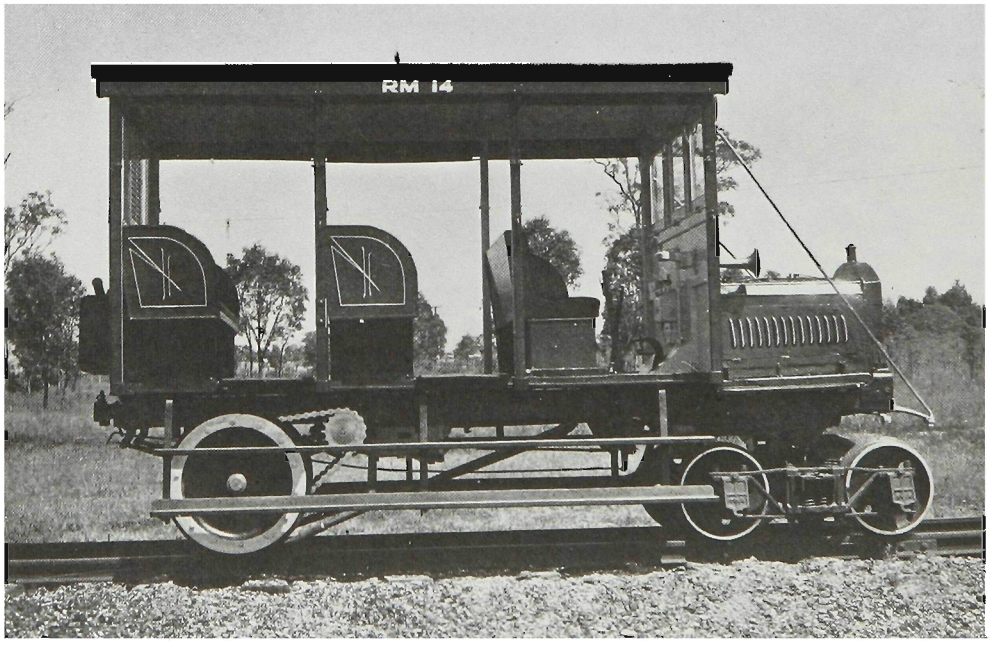


The early days at Biggs Camp, later to be known as Grandchester. The first short section of the Queensland Railways was laid between Ipswich and here. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

Opening of First Railway, Ipswich, 1865. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



Rail motor No. 14 with weather protection for passengers and driver in place. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



One of the earliest rail motors to run on the Queensland Railways. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

Chapter Four

Till the land that lies like a giant asleep shall wake to the victory won
And the hearts of the Nation Builders shall know that the work is done.

Geo. Essex Evans

The opening of the first twenty-one miles (34 km) of railway triggered off demands from other centres to replace the not only drearily slow but exorbitantly priced cartage by wheel transport. The early settlement days were bonanza ones for the teamsters. Freight rates went as high as £39 ($78) per ton from Ipswich out to Dalby, and by the time goods reached Charleville the rate could reach £50 ($100), or more, per ton.

In far north Queensland the teamsters' freight rates in some instances were at least double these for comparative distances. It was costly and aggravating when your bullocky dawdled at a swollen stream waiting for the water to fall to make a safe crossing and, whilst he dawdled, brightened the days of waiting with the free use of your rum consignment. More than one who succumbed to this temptation worked off his obligation to the consignor by adjustment of freight charges.

Central Queensland settlers were presenting a strong and persistant claim for a railway to run out from Rockhampton. In August 1865 tenders were called for the building of a line over thirty-three miles (53 km) to Westwood. The contract was given to Rourk, Collier & Company at the price of £15,000 ($30,000). The railway was called the Great Northern Line and was to quickly extend westward for hundreds of miles, with branches, through rapidly growing settlements in wide-ranging pastoral and agricultural lands where gold and copper had been discovered in some localities. It was some time before the central area was referred to as anything but "The North".

It was ironical that this line should be commenced so soon after

the one in the south as those who now demanded it had been among the loudest in opposition to the first Railway Bill. Maybe one who influenced the early start of the Great Northern Line was a chap named Arthur Palmer, destined to become a Queensland premier, and later to be knighted. In 1863 he leased from the Crown 900 square miles (2330 km^2) of country on the Belyando River some 250 miles (402 km) west of Rockhampton. It was called Beaufort Holding and the new railway was going his way. It is indicative of the times and its insecurity, that even the eminent and highly influential Sir Arthur was no match against the financial sharks of his era. By 1904, thirty years after he had resigned his four year term as premier, Beaufort Holding was in the red for rent and expenses and the ageing Sir Arthur was forced to surrender his lease back to the Government and abandon the old home. The railway had not struggled out as far as Beaufort until about 1890.

It was certainly odd that the virtually worthless Rockhampton-Westwood track and its indefinite extension should have been thrown down so early when, at that time, people a couple of hundred miles north of Brisbane were eager for a railway to run from Maryborough into the rich timber, agricultural and grazing lands along the Mary and Burnett Rivers. From the upper reachers of the Mary River the grandest of timber was being hewn and despatched to Maryborough by rafting down the river. Perhaps just as important to the Government, with the first railways running on wood-burning engines, would have been a short railway to run north from Maryborough into the Burrum district were coal had been found. Several parties had been out to examine the coal indications and were favourably impressed. A company was formed and a lease of 640 acres (259 ha) of the field taken up. A very short railway was all that was needed to assist the project with transport.

Whilst at Rockhampton there was rejoicing over the beginning of a railway system, the line in the south had began climbing the Little Liverpool Range. The engineers were getting their first taste of the trials of railway tunnelling and one worker, Jim Edwards, had the tragic distinction of being the first to give a life in the building of the Queensland Railways. The *Courier* of 19 August 1865 gave just brief mention of the sad incident when it reported:

> James Edwards, a miner working in Victoria Tunnel on the Little Liverpool Range, was killed between 8 and 9 a.m. on 15th instant. He was preparing props for support when the roof gave way and

he was buried under 2 tons of rock and crushed. Another man, Davis, when jumping clear was struck on the shoulder and slightly bruised.

On 27 September 1865, at a gala function in Rockhampton, Governor Bowen turned the first sod for the building of the railway. Promises of an early continuation past the first section were given without any knowledge of the difficulties which were to arise. It transpired that the second section was not started until years later and the first section was not completed until two years later, on 27 August 1867, and officially opened on 17 September of that year. Although there was some hold up in the supply of material, the reasons for delay were mainly political. When the line was first commenced press comment had it that the short section to be built was practically useless and was only a placatory gesture to the "noisy North".

With this second track down the pattern of building separate isolated railway lines for specific purposes throughout the Colony was set. As grazing lands were stocked, or agriculture, mining and timber getting were established somewhere, or because it was considered politically expedient at the time, down went a railway line. None connected one with the other and for years not one ran to the metropolis.

It did seem, in 1865, that Brisbane was about to be connected to Ipswich by rail. In November of that year a survey had been taken of the proposed route, but the hope thus raised was not fulfilled until eleven years had elapsed. Also in 1865 a project to lay rails from Brisbane to Sandgate was started. The line was to run through German Station – it became Nundah when the railway eventually came. Nundah is historically distinguished as the first free settlement in Queensland, established in 1838. It was established as a German mission to minister to the Aboriginals. Named "Zion's Hill", it folded up for lack of financial support in the early 1840s to become German Station, a farming community of mainly German settlers. The railway, despite early expectations, did not run out to Sandgate until 1882. There was sustained opposition to this railway (running to the coast) from Ipswich where it was considered a threat to this town maintaining itself as a marine, or at least a semi-marine, centre.

Whilst two rail connections for Brisbane were projected in 1865, and remained just plans for ten or eleven years, Warwick fared a little better – perhaps by a more potent influence operating. In September of 1865 Minister for Works Macalister brought down an Appropriation

Bill seeking £100,000 ($200,000) for the building of a railway from Toowoomba to Warwick, a distance of fifty-eight miles (93 km). This line was to run south directly towards the New South Wales-Queensland border sixty-four miles (102 km) on from Warwick. The factions in the House were at war immediately. To some the mere mention of railway, with the financial implications involved, was stark anathema. One supporting speaker drew the ire of an opponent when calling attention to railway building in New South Wales. He was told that New South Wales "was a Colony notorious for its bad financial policy, and a bad example to quote." A Mr. Haly expressed regret that he was not a MLA for the preceeding season when this railway was sanctioned. He would have strongly opposed it, he said, "because all branch lines, and Warwick was a branch line, should be built by private enterprise." As a champion for the north he contended that in this matter the Government was adding to the injustice being shown the northern district in the matter of railway building. The squattocracy west of Toowoomba again demonstrated their strength and the measure was carried by thirteen votes to five. As well as serving expanding settlements on potentially good land, the Warwick line once it reached the border – over which the great bulk of traffic from the south was coming – would replace the slow, cumbersome wagons.

However, it was not until 1871 that the Warwick railway was officially opened, held back mainly by the serious troubles, mainly financial, that had gathered and struck the Colony in 1866.

In Warwick the citizens, with great expectations of an early arrival of a railway, were haggling over where the rail terminus should be. A public meeting on the evening of 9 September 1865 was attended by a large proportion of the 1500 population of Warwick who failed to achieve unanimity. Some pressed for the terminus to be near the Square, brought along a petition urging a decision in their favour, but counter petitions were presented. The mayor, who chaired the meeting, seems to have had the last word when he informed the meeting, and perhaps with some advance knowledge, "the Government will put it near the Race Course anyway".

As Warwick people argued over a railway they were not to get for another six years anyhow, railway building further east continued. The rails had advanced from Biggs Camp and were labouriously thrown over the Little Liverpool Range to the accompaniment of parliamentary uproar over the cost and evident slow progress. The reputation of Abram Fitzgibbon as a railway engineer was being questioned and poor

Fitz was subjected to some nasty jibes in the House. The Honourable E. I. C. Browne asked in the Legislative Council: "Had the Government be deceived or not by Engineer Fitzgibbon as to the cost of the Southern and Western Railway as it was costing a third more than the House had been led to believe it would by that gentleman who, in 1863, was supposed to be a sort of heaven-born engineer?"

The Honourable W. Wood claimed: "It is doubtful whether this railway, which was to have been so cheaply constructed, will not cost as much as the single broad gauge line in other colonies." Figures called for in the House went to show that, whilst the estimated cost of construction was set at £5000 ($10,000) per mile, actual cost had risen to £8000 ($16,000) and even £10,000 ($20,000) per mile.

Fitzgibbon went into action. On his advice the contractors were sacked. But Peto, Brassey and Betts, with friends in high places no doubt, fought back. Discussions took place resulting in Peto and company being allowed to resume the contract after giving firm promises on future progress of the work.

Back on to the job went the contractors who very soon were once more in a cloud of strife. The line had been taken to Helidon, twenty-eight miles (45 km) out from Biggs Camp when tempers flared again in Parliament regarding railway financing. Disturbing criticism was coming from the press and public. Railway costing remained high. Peto, Brassey and Betts claimed that certain dislocation of the railway work had been caused by an enforced alteration in plans. Mr. Fitzgibbon contended the contractors were not employing enough men on the job.

A call for a thorough review of the railway programme was so strong and persistant that the Legislative Council decided in May 1866 that a select committee enquire into all matters connected with railway building in the Colony. Naturally the atmosphere in the Legislative Assembly was far from tranquil with passions being torn to tatters as members pro and anti railway debated bitterly. One, the fiery Member from Maryborough, the Honourable Mr. W. H. Walsh moved for the Assembly to set up its own special committee to enquire into railway affairs. He made caustic remarks on such matters as the Government having to resume railway contracts and had a bit to say about "differences with contractors over land and undue payment for land resumed". Another speaker, evidently a railway supporter, cracked back at Walsh and poured ridicule on the suggestion that the Assembly set up a committee of enquiry when the upper house already had this well in hand. As a final thrust he said he considered Walsh was in no

position to talk of enquiries as he (Walsh) has "contracted to supply the Government with 1000 tons [1016 t] of coal from Burrum at the very nice price of 20 shillings [$2] per ton". The move for the committee failed.

Once more during this debate, as members discussed what they considered was the messy state of the railways, they pressed for it to be given to private enterprise, although at the time there seemed no indication that any group in the private sector was particularly anxious to take over.

In the meantime, before the Select Committee could get down to business, bickering between the railway administrators and Peto, Brassey and Betts became intense. Questions of railway building responsibilities continued to be argued. Charges were made against Peto of failing to meet certain requirements of their contract. Counter charges were laid by the contractors, particularly against Mr. Abram Fitzgibbon, of interference with the continuity of their work in a manner effecting its efficient execution. Matters had reached such an unhappy stage that the Government was seized with the necessity of taking some immediate action in an endeavour to control a situation rapidly getting completely out of hand.

It was decided to call in an independent arbiter and Mr. C. Highinbotham, Chief Engineer in Victoria, was induced to come to Queensland and arbitrate on the case. Mr. Abram Fitzgibbon appeared for the Railway Department and a Mr. Wilcox for Peto, Brassey and Betts. After hearing argument Mr. Higinbotham gave as his finding that the contractors were the injured party.

It was purely incidental that Mr. Higinbotham, a man who whilst rising to high eminence in Victoria still found it possible to remain forever a radical, was the one chosen to arbitrate. In 1892, when holding a high State office, he dropped in to the Melbourne Trades Hall and arranged for a percentage of his salary to be contributed to the funds of the defence committee of locked-out and striking workers. This was only one of the times he shocked those who courted "respectability".

It can be said that the arbitration case firmly set the seal to Abram Fitzgibbon's future and his ability became the subject for caustic remarks in Parliament. One question quickly asked was "Does the Government still have confidence in Mr. Fitzgibbon after the Peto, Brassey and Betts arbitration case?" Members sought information regarding the amount of damages arising out of the case. To embarrass

the Government further the section of railway from Ipswich already open for regular traffic was failing to attract the patronage expected and, to encourage business, passenger and freight charges had been reduced from those first set out as 4d. (4c) per mile for first class and 3d. (3c) for second class passengers, with freight charges ranging from 6¼d. (6.4c) to 1s. ½d. (10.5c) per ton mile. These rates operated for the railway from Rockhampton also.

Into all this trouble had stepped Arthur Macalister, he who had fathered the first Railway Bill. The beginning of 1866 brought a change of premiers, as the personal affairs of Premier Herbert necessitated his absence from the Colony and Macalister took over the premiership with J. Watts as Minister for Works and Lands. (Until 1888 this portfolio also embraced responsibility for railways). This was the commencement of the games of "musical chairs" or perhaps better described as "the diseased handkerchief" that occupied the young Parliament from time to time for many years. Over the period from 1866 to 1870 the premiership changed hands six times and during the forty-two years following Separation from New South Wales until Federation of the colonies in 1901, Queenslanders witnessed the rise and fall of twenty-one ministries. It was significant that usually with each change of ministry came a change of engineer in chief. Perhaps this was because an engineer could so easily be made the scapegoat for wasting of money and for alleged shortcomings in the building of the railway system, a constant hot potato with its terrific drag on the Treasury.

There was one engineer, however, who did not have to wait for an incoming ministry to meance him with the axe. Abram Fitzgibbon's star was fast waning when Arthur Macalister took over from Premier Herbert on 2 February 1866. Appointed the first Commissioner for Railways in 1863, Fitzgibbon evidently was no great success in the job for in 1864 he was back again as Engineer-in-Chief and A. O. Herbert was filling the position of Commissioner. By the time Macalister took over in 1866 the Government had begun to realize that in Fitzgibbon it had taken a viper to its bosom and from then until 1867 experienced no little trouble in getting rid of a man in whom great trust had been placed, but who was to be openly accused of having proved himself an expensive nuisance, a humbug, and as claimed in the House, "a smooth talking railway swindler".

Nevertheless, the Southern and Western Line continued to be extended. Because of a prevailing financial crisis and bitter wrangling between political factions, no function was arranged to celebrate the

official opening of the line to Helidon, and completion of the first fifty miles (80 km) of track. It was declared officially open on 30 July 1866.

The wage plugs building the railway would hardly have celebrated. They had begun demanding in strong terms, a reduction in the long daily hours of work; theirs was the first call heard in the railway service for an eight-hour day. The gruelling labour over the Little Liverpool Range, working the then standard ten hour shifts, at times longer, had fanned to a flame the spark of revolt which had existed for some time. Many navvies, hustled on to the job, came unfitted and unused to such hard slogging work. It is pretty certain that the contractors were pushing the men to the limit after giving their promise to hasten forward. The concern of the navvies for an easing of the work load was strengthened by the knowledge that looming, not far ahead, was the rugged and formidably towering Main Dividing Range over which the rails must be thrown to reach the waiting township of Toowoomba. But "Jordon's lambs" were refusing to be lamb-like under conditions on, and off, the job that were fast becoming intolerable. Sprinkled among the men were Irish rebels, Chartists from Britain with their zeal for progressive reforms undampened, and others who had fled or where driven from their homelands for refusing to march to the measured thumping of the national drum. The message from the Eureka Stockade was still fresh on the air. Sporadic stoppages of work were occurring whilst the men gathered, spoke of unionism and argued around measures likely to bring heed to the demand for a better deal. Fuel was added to fire by wage payments being delayed at times. But heavier misfortune was rushing upon them.

Down at Parliament House it was found that the Colony's fiscal policy, a tenuous thing at any time, had suddenly fallen apart. A definite loan policy had been inaugurated in 1861. The first attempt to borrow capital outside the Colony was most successful. So was the second in 1863, but in 1864 a further loan was negotiated only after much difficulty and under very unfavourable arrangements for the Government. Pressed by wide-spread demands for even elementary public works to be taken in hand, with railways and telegraph communication top call on finance, an arrangement was made with the Agra and Masterman Bank in England for the bank to negotiate the sale of Queensland's debentures. The bank was agreeable to advance £50,000 ($100,000) monthly. The future of the railways was morgaged as collateral against most of this money. In fact, practically all loan money for 1866 was spent on the railways. And so had begun payment *ad*

infinitum of interest to overseas bondholders, clasping as a palsied hand, keeping the railway industry in constant poverty that was to be its ugly companion for 100 years. This continual debt grossly effected efficiency and was wielded as a weapon by succeeding governments against railwaymens' strivings for reasonable advancements of wage and salary rates, and improvements of working conditions to align with workers in outside industries.

But advances from the Agra and Masterman Bank suddenly ceased. The bank had crashed and closed up. The year 1866 was indeed chock full of trouble for a colony striving to establish itself against heavy odds. A severe drought settled over Queensland throughout 1866 to be followed by floods in 1867. Wool prices tumbled. The few gold discoveries up till then were providing only small returns. Squatters were falling into the hands of the money lenders, and there were already many finance companies ready to settle like vultures on the weakened men on the land. Morgage companies were squeezing interest rates, as high in some cases as seventeen and a half per cent, out of their victims. William Landsborough, who trod lonely trails to open up new land, and Ernest Henry, the founder of Cloncurry, were two who lost their holdings to the wily financiers of that period.

Very early in 1866 the finances of the Colony were reaching a parlous state and Treasurer Joshua Peter Bell notified the House that he intended to issue what became known as "Bell's Greenbacks" – inconvertable Government notes to be recognized as legal tender in the Colony. However, a bill was passed providing for the issue of Treasury bonds to the amount of £300,000 ($600,000) at an interest rate of ten per cent. The Union Bank was willing to advance certain sums of money to the Government monthly, and other banks agreed to hold unpaid Government cheques for a little longer.

Unemployment was growing in all sectors of the community. Civil servants were given the choice of the sack of accepting reduced salaries. A number in the lower echelons of the Service had to accept unemployment, they enjoyed no alternative. In the railway department the position was chaotic and tragic. Railway building, including the line from Rockhampton, had virtually ground to a halt. One thousand workers were abruptly laid off without a thought for their future welfare. Most were in camps along the line.

With their meagre wages lost and nowhere to turn for other employment, the railwaymen quickly reached a stage of desperation. Two hundred of them gathered at the Helidon railway station and,

defying the station master, crowded a train about to leave and travelled to Ipswich intent on demanding some consideration from those they believed to be in a position to ease their plight. The angry men were met at Ipswich by Mr. Joshua P. Bell who was unlucky enough to be acting, only for a brief term, as Minister for Works, and thus he was saddled with the unpalatable duty of contending with Queensland's first train jumpers, and hungry, frustrated, vociferous men at that.

Mr. Bell, a man of promise and platitudes, is reported to have "talked kindly and encouragingly to them, and promised relief camps and also to provide £1 [$2] per week until better times came – which he believed would be before long." The Minister arranged for them to have a "good dinner at an hotel." The good dinner, the only tangible result of the trip and demonstration, was the last good dinner they were to enjoy for some time. After returning from whence they came and hearing no more of the promised relief camps and miserable weekly hand-out, a train was again taken over with the journey culminating this time in a demonstration outside Parliament House in Brisbane. Thus was written by these ill-considered railwaymen the inglorious record of the Colony's first unemployed camps. There is no record of a "good dinner" being turned on for the demonstrators on this second occasion. A deputation of five was allowed to interview the Minister in the House and the depressing relief camps were set up shortly after. This was the beginning of a long tradition of struggle by Queensland railway workers against continued injustices.

Mr. R. G. W. Herbert returned and resumed the premiership on 20 July 1866, but either would not or could not hold the reins of Government in a Parliament staggered by its heavy problems and seething with discontent. Arthur Macalister was back as Premier again in less than a month, on 7 August, to continue facing up to the most trying problems until, in a tantrum, he threw the premiership back in the Governor's face on 15 August 1867.

From Rockhampton in 1866 a petition from the unemployed, accompanied by a separate one from the Rockhampton merchants, was presented to the Legislative Assembly "seeking to relieve destitution and want". The House was told that numbers of starving unemployed "were sticking up bakers' carts in the street". Relief camps were set up and each relief worker received 15s. ($1.50) for performing three days work, 5s. (50c) less than their contempories in the south. Surely here was proof of the claim that the north was discriminated against in favour of the south.

The first workers' strike took place in the most unlikely locality, the relief camps. Married men received the same pay as did single men and the former complained of this inequity. Their complaints were ignored and they bailed up, refusing to work on the score that no work and no money only meant starving a little sooner than if working and trying to sustain themselves and a wife and a family on a hand-out that was barely enough to enable a single man to hold body and soul together. They gained a few shillings extra. Many were railwaymen.

It was incongruous, to say the least, that one gentleman in the House during debate on the unemployment situation, endeavoured to switch some blame on to the workers – he said "After gold discovery in 1852 wages rose to a very high rate, but wages must return to those of 1848; the workers were more frugal there." So the economists of modern time are not original with such cracks as "Australians could be pricing themselves out of work" and "inflation from cost-push is spurred by wage-push" and "unrestrained wage and salary rises are eroding the base of the economy."

Most of the unemployed left the unpleasant relief camps. Some went fossicking but most trekked into New South Wales where work was plentiful either on the goldfields or in the townships where employers had to offer good wages to hold staff from chasing the precious metal.

On 9 October 1866 the Select Committee, set up by the Legislative Council to enquire into all matters connected with railway building, tendered its report. The Committee summed up the views of its members as follows:

> Whilst members have reason to believe in the success of the narrow gauge railway they regret that fuller information was not sought by the Government of the day from first-class engineers prior to committing the Colony to an expense which has eventuated in such disastrous financial consequences, and they also feel the wisest course would have been to have tried the experiment on a small scale instead of commencing so many large works simultaneously.

Engineer Coote's early words of wisdom seemed to be at last seeping through – but it was too late to turn back.

As 1866 drew to a close the Macalister Ministry was coming to grips with the problems bedevilling the Colony. The drought was lifting and the financial position improving with arrangements for a continuation of loan money from England well under way. It was

possible to push on with the Southern and Western Railway, getting it over the Main Range to Toowoomba and making up some of the lost time following the laying off of men. But the Government found it was not so easy to replace the labour force that had refused to wait, stuck in relief camps, the Government's pleasure. Only after some recruiting activity was the navvy staff brought up to requirements.

By this time the standing of Mr. Abram Fitzgibbon had plummetted to zero. His sins had betrayed him. He was sacked and a Mr. Plews became Engineer-in-Chief. But recorded parliamentary debates show that Abram was determined to make a complete nuisance of himself rather than bow out with whatever grace he could muster. The railway had just about reached Toowoomba but some features of the construction and apparent faults indicated that some hanky-panky had been indulged in by Fitzgibbon. The firm of Sir Charles Fox in England, responsible for procuring railway material and rolling stock for Queensland, had come under suspicion as being in league with Fitzgibbon in the matter of delivering material in poor condition and of faulty workmanship. Premier Macalister had called for a full and comprehensive report on the whole matter from the Commissioner for Railways, Mr. A. O. Herbert. Engineer Plews was not long in collating a mass of damning evidence against both Fitzgibbon and Fox & Co.

At the time the irrespressible Abram was demanding the payment of £4000 ($8000) owing to him as salary. This was being held back because, for some reason, he was reluctant to hand over to Plews all correspondence, maps, plans and other paraphernalia concerned with the railways. Fitzgibbon claimed he had handed over all this stuff but Plews, who had no reason for lying or subterfuge, denied this. In a statement to Parliament Premier Macalister said:

> Mr. Fitzgibbon is bound to lodge with the present Engineer-in-Chief all correspondence, maps, plans, in fact all copies of everything with which he had anything to do as Chief Engineer for the Government . . . As to the balance of £4,000 [$8000] owing to Mr. Fitzgibbon I have given instructions that not one penny is to be paid until he has handed over all these things.

It was not long before the report asked of the Commissioner was produced. It was tabled in Parliament and contained some startling information. Its outstanding features were the allegations of faulty material in bridge construction, including the Bremer River Bridge; criticism of the Victoria Tunnel on the Little Liverpool Range and

some unsatisfactory track laying. The report also contained information of serious defects in rolling stock sent out from England.

Engineer Plews had advised the Commissioner that through "shameful neglect" no necessary braces or ties were on the bridge work sent out from England. Some of these bridges on the Main Range were on curves, and this was a serious matter, the Engineer said.

Dealing with the state of locomotives, the report set out that the first four sent out from England were in quite good order and condition, so was a steam crane and other items of the track making plant. But in 1867 it was a far different matter. Locos, a steam crane, tools and other equipment were badly designed and shamefully rough and careless in workmanship. The report went on to point out that locos supplied by Messrs. Neilson & Co. of Glasgow, three in number, had weigh-bar shafts, brackets and other parts made of soft metal although it was claimed they were case hardened. Nuts for cylinders, steam chests, dome covers and glands (about 320) were of no particular size and had to be swaged down and retopped to fit standard spanners. Many bolts were missing altogether. Stays and rivets in the fireboxes were leaking. Tender tanks were also leaking and "putty had been used excessively to stop leaks".

One loco was found to have the left driving wheel one inch (25 mm) in diameter larger than the right. Another loco that persisted in running off the road was eventually discovered to have a difference in the trailing wheels of three-eights of an inch (9.2 mm). The locos, bridge work and all other faulty items had been sent out from England by Sir Charles Fox & Co. and Sir Charles, along with Abram Fitzgibbon, certainly copped some abuse in Parliament.

Mr. Pat O'Sullivan, Member for West Moreton, addressed himself as follows:

> It appears there is not a bridge or culvert that will not be falling time after time; before the first section was finished part of it had given away. I believe the railway is the most gigantic swindle that has ever occurred in any Colony, and the sooner the railway is pulled up by the roots the better.

Mr. T. P. Pugh told the House: "It all means that all the work sent to the Colony for some time past is just fit for selling as old iron." He said he "knew Fitzgibbon was a clever man – too clever in some particulars for the Queensland Government. He trusted Sir Charles Fox would no longer be employed by the Colony in any manner whatsoever." He was assured the Government had wiped Sir Charles.

Whilst the storm raged around him Fitzgibbon had asked that he be allowed to come into the House to make explanation on the whole unwholesome subject. The House was just about unanimous that he be kept out. Some no doubt feared his plausable tongue. At least one member openly admitted to it in an interjection. When it was suggested it might be a good idea to put Fitzgibbon on the mat in Parliament and give him a good doing over this member quickly opposed the suggestion saying "instead of turning Fitzgibbon over when he was before the bar of the House he would turn Members over, perhaps."

Mr. William Miles, Member for Maranoa, left little doubt as to his opinion. With some heat he exclaimed:

> Fitzgibbon is characterised as an able diplomatist and the House would be in much the same position at the end of the examination, as far as getting out any facts, in connection with this swindle railway; for it could be called nothing else – iron bridges have been erected where there is excellent timber on the spot and at other places where not a stick of timber is on the spot timber was carted 16 miles [26 km] to make wooden bridges. If reports are true Fitzgibbon has swindled the Colony. I look upon Fitzgibbon as a curse to the country, and he grossly deceived the Colony in under-estimating the cost of the railway.

Finally the annoying man, anxious for his £4000 ($8000), passed on to Plews all the bits and pieces belonging to the engineering job. With a sigh of relief Macalister and his ministers ridded themselves of an expensive encumbrance said to be just too clever for his boots. Some more hot air was vented in the House as the Government as hastily as possible swept the disturbing subject under the mat.

The badly done by infant railway – with the weight of harsh criticism heavy on its narrow shoulders, poorly nourished with finance and equipment – completed the tortuous climb to the top of the Main Range and the first puffing pioneer steamed fussily into Toowoomba, despite the not-so-well strengthened bridges that were given greater stability later.

Criticism aside, surmounting the Range was the culmination of a most creditable job by those responsible for the actual track laying. It had called for contour grading around spurs overlooking deep chasms and the blasting out of a number of tunnels on dizzy heights with equipment and other engineering aids severally limited by today's standards. Some of the tunnels run long distances and when steaming heavily through the longest, driver and fireman worked with a wetted

sweat-rag thrown over the face as protection against stifling sulphur-laden smoke which entered the cabin from the belching funnel.

The Toowoomba section was completed on 12 April 1867, and officially opened on 1 May. This completed the contract held by Peto, Brassey and Betts. Premier Macalister determined to push on with railway building. He was convinced that the most pressing need of the Colony was a network of railways and had his Minister for Works, J. Watts, go ahead and arrange for tenders to be called for the continuation of the railway from Toowoomba westward towards Dalby, a thriving central township for the settled pastoral lands. Although finance for expensive public works was far from easy to ensure, this did not deter Arthur Macalister, the visionary and railway builder.

The railway contract was given to the firm of Bourne & Bourne. The line had not reached Dalby, fifty-two miles (84 km) from Toowoomba, when the contractors were beset by trouble that projected their workforce into a tragic plight. Through bad management, plus financial difficulties, and some weakness on the Government side in maintaining the continuity of money advances, the navvies were without wages for seven weeks. The workers were jammed in the middle of the starvation sandwich, with their position becoming more desperate each day. They took the only measure available to them, they gathered in Dalby and staged threatening demonstrations forcing the Government to dismiss Bourne & Bourne, take over the unfinished work and pay the wages owing.

During one of the raging parliamentary debates that the mere mention of the word railway engendered, one member, speaking of the unhappy lot of the navvies at Dalby, delivered himself of the understatement of the period when he said "they showed great restraint".

Whilst much has been written into history to show that the first decade of the new-born Queensland Colony was chock full of political turmoil, financial problems and bitter controversy around the implementation of a public works programme, including in particular the railways, and those who held high administrative office praised, or damned, far less has been recorded of the foul deals meted out to the Colony's wage plugs.

The largest work force was engaged in building railways. These workers were gathered together in remote places and herded into camps of tents and bough sheds where living conditions were always extremely harsh. Many were married, some with children, and back-breaking toil over long hours each day earned hardly more than mere substenance.

Most were newly-married immigrants who had left behind mass unemployment and wide-spread poverty to come, they were encouraged to believe, to a country offering "a cheering prospect of wealth, and fame to genius, combined with virtue and industry open for them under the expansive freedom of the Colonial institutions", to requote the uplifting words of Governor Bowen on that day of rejoicing at Biggs Camp when the first section of line was declared open. Having experienced already a sudden plunge into unemployment, life in relief camps – with that lean assistance given only after begging and demonstrating – and with the constant likelihood of the wage stream abruptly drying up through default of contractor or Government, thoughts must have turned at times to a comparison of their economic lot with that of convicts whose transportation to the Colony had been discontinued only a little more than twenty years before. The navvies' "cheering prospect" when compared to that of the convicts, wretched as their lot was, lacked something even the men of the broad arrow were assured of. Their masters, unlike those employing the navvies, were obliged to provide for the poor devils serving them food, clothing and shelter of *some* kind.

The work on the line out from Toowoomba settled down again to a regular grind despite some difficulty in recruiting all the desired labour and the Toowoomba-Dalby section was officially opened on 20 April 1868, but the track laying from Toowoomba out to Warwick continued slowly. The Rockhampton-Westwood section had been declared officially opened (Governor Bowen doing the honours) on 27 August 1867. It was certainly slow going on this section of a little more than thirty miles (48 km) in length, that was first estimated to be finished in 1866. As well as the hold ups over the period when the rail workers were thrown among the other unemployed in Rockhampton because of lack of available finance, delay in the arrival of railway material by boat added to the slow progress of the work. But by the end of the 1860s the Colony's modest rail system was showing an income of over £1000 ($2000).

As the Governor was officiating at the railway opening at Rockhampton, in his ears must have been ringing echos of the fine dust up that had taken place a few weeks earlier between Premier Arthur Macalister and himself. On 15 August Macalister and his colleagues had resigned in high dudgeon with Parliament in a state of disorder wrangling again over finance, or the lack of it, brought on this time by serious floods throughout the land. Of course a number of politicians

were whipping their familiar joss, the railway. Even some of Macalister's henchmen were not too happy with what appeared an obsession to push on with railway building so long as a pound or two could be squeezed from somewhere. Calls were made in the House for a Royal Commission to review railway projects. Other members returned to the old question of handing over the railways to private enterprise. Some backing was given to a move made by a private member for a private company to be given a permit to put down a rail link between Brisbane and Ipswich. It failed. People with interests in the rich farming land at Cleveland, out from Brisbane, had mounted a strong campaign for a railway from Brisbane.

Macalister accused the Governor, Sir George Bowen, of annoying interference in the affairs of Government. In fact the Governor was told he was "preventing the good government of the Colony". The *Annual Review of Queensland* records that the Governor accepted the resignation of Macalister "reluctantly". It also records that in tossing in his resignation the retiring Premier expressed his sense of frustration by complaining that the Governor "was placing every constriction preventing he and his colleagues from carrying on the business of the Colony, and no matter what Government was in power they could not do any good."

Mr. George Sanderman, Leader of the Opposition, was sent for by the Governor and asked to form a ministry. The Opposition Leader squibbed on it but Mr. R. R. Mackenzie took the job. The portfolio of Minister for Works (and Railways), was taken up by Mr. J. Douglas for a month or two until Mr. A. H. Palmer took it over.

When Mackenzie took charge in 1867 the population of the Colony had more than doubled since Separation in 1859. More and more settlers were spreading out to distant areas, adding to the responsibilities of the Government. One great event, two months after he took office, should have favoured Mackenzie. In October 1867 James Nash wrote to the Minister for Works and Lands (also Railways) advising that he had discovered a rich goldfield in the Wide Bay District – Gympie. The great Gympie gold rush was on shortly after and the Treasury was soon being enriched from the product of what was to prove one of Australia's famous gold strikes. The country was emerging from the setbacks caused by the flood and Mackenzie and his mates, it would seem, had a good chance of making a fair go at governing. But they lasted for only a little over twelve months.

They did, however, keep moving the railway projects which were

in hand when they came into office – the Southern and Western Line, continuing on from Dalby, and the Toowoomba-Warwick Line. The Rockhampton-Westwood section, whilst handling a little traffic, was not extended until much later, and after the northerners in Rockhampton and elsewhere in the central division had got into holts with the government of the day.

Before Mackenzie and his Ministry crashed tenders had been called for a new Railway Workshop at Ipswich. This was a pressing necessity as the tiny original workshop could not accommodate the number of locomotives now on hand, and more were coming. The four locos that had founded the railway system were quickly followed by four more in 1865. Classed as the AIO type they were of similar size but with a different arrangement of the driving and bogie wheels. More of these arrived the following year and eventually a total of thirteen were purchased. All were built by Neilson & Company, in Glasgow. They gave great service, some until 1913 or later. One drifted from the railways to a sugar mill in the Bundaberg district and scuttled in and out of cane fields until well into the 1960s.

Finding it impossible to carry on, the Mackenzie Ministry folded up and Mr. C. Lilley was installed as Premier on 25 November 1868. The portfolio of Minister for Works remained the responsibility of A. H. Palmer. The Lilley Ministry lived for only eighteen months, and on 3 May 1870, A. H. Palmer became Premier, ready to bulldoze through any forest of trouble. He held the fort for almost four years, the longest-running premier up to then since R. G. W. Herbert, the first. Palmer made Arthur Macalister, the railway builder, his Minister for Works.

The Palmer Ministry could rely on a majority of only one in the House, but what he lacked in numbers Palmer made up for by using strong-arm tactics, peculiar to him. The *Annual Review of Queensland* sets out that; "Palmer's earliest experience in Queensland was gained in bullock driving. It was said he had a great demand of language (of a sort) and he was a loud voiced bully of the House of Assembly." He came to the premiership promising to raise money by securities on general revenue to further the railway building projects, and hasten telegraph extensions.

Bringing the railway to Brisbane from Ipswich, never a dormant question, had again become a vigourously pursued demand. With railway estimates being exceeded in practically all cases, it was argued that money saved by stricter supervision of railway funds, and wiser

spending, would go a long way to meet the cost of the Ipswich-Brisbane link. Railway finance became such a hotly debated question that the Government agreed to have a Royal Commission enquire into railway financing and to advise on further railway construction.

Amidst this rising tension suddenly the portfolio of Minister for Works was re-allocated. Perhaps Macalister, after holding the job for only a very brief period, would not put up with Palmer's bullying methods. The much bossed railways this time came under the control of the Honourable W. H. Walsh. And he walked straight into trouble with the "noisy North", after first having to face up to a general election.

With a growing mass of problems, and Government-proposed legislation being continually blocked by the Opposition, Premier Palmer fronted the Governor with the proposition that Parliament be prorogued for five months – a sort of "cooling off" period, during which Palmer might, by tactics of his own, whip up stronger forces. The Governor would not entertain the idea. Parliament was dissolved and the people called on to pass judgement on the politicians in a general election.

The Palmer group was returned with an improved majority. One promise they took back with them was to get on with the extension of the Rockhampton-Westwood railway line. Compromising in the House with the critics of railway expenditure, a proposal to convert the existing Rockhampton line to only a 2 ft. 9 ins. (83.8 cm) gauge and build extensions to this narrowed gauge was agreed to. When this information reached the people in the north they adamantly refused to accept what they termed a toy railway. A well supported protest sent down to Brisbane, and some hammering of local politicians, squashed the proposal, claimed as further evidence of the north being discriminated against to favour the south. The threat to campaign for a separate state in the north was raised again.

After the success of the Rockhampton protest a start was made to carry the railway over the second section planned – from Westwood to Comet (141 miles [227 km] from Rockhampton) and through the Mackenzie and Dawson Rivers' country, taking the line then to Emerald midst the Central Highlands. For some time the work proceeded in a feeble and desultory fashion and it was not until May 1874 that the extension of about six miles (10 km) to Gogango was officially opened. By then the navvies had laboured over the Gogango Range and were on the easier-going flats, but with a network of water courses still to face.

In the south work on the Toowoomba-Warwick line had continued and was now completed. This section was officially opened on 30 January 1871. Track laying reached out towards Stanthorpe, with Wallangarra on the New South Wales border beckoning.

The Royal Commission came up with its findings in April 1872. As such Commissions usually do, there was a bit of white-washing of officialdom. Its main recommendations were: that all railway projects and intended extensions should continue; Brisbane should be connected to Ipswich by rail as soon as possible; and railways should be constructed at a cheaper cost as far as possible. Useless, and costly, advice. Rapid development was demanding that rail transport be provided in an ever-growing number of places. To say costs should be lowered was an empty recommendation without showing how this could be done under the prevailing circumstances, and with a severely limited choice of personnel capable of efficient overall railway service administration.

The Government was finding more money for all projects these days. Overseas Government bonds had become popular and general revenue was on the up and up. At Gympie the miners were providing an increasing yield of gold, to be matched by the flow of the coveted yellow metal from Charters Towers, in the north, after this golden bonanza was discovered, ironically by a member of that race treated so cruelly by the Colony's settlers on so many occasions – an Aboriginal. Jupiter Mossman came upon the first signs of this fabulous goldfield when riding with a prospecting party of whites at the end of 1871. Mount Morgan, out from Rockhampton and early described as "a mountain of gold", also added to the Treasury. The three centres yelled for rail transport. They had to wait quite a time.

The Palmer Ministry during its four years of office managed to keep moving, albeit slowly, the three railway projects then in hand – Warwick to Wallangarra (a distance of sixty-four miles [103 km] – not completed until 1887. Dalby to Charleville (a distance of 330 miles [558 km]) but not completed until 1888. The third line, leading from Rockhampton West and making for Comet and then Emerald, with its ultimate destination Longreach (centre of vast grazing lands), moved exceedingly slowly over the remaining sections of the 427 miles (687 km) from Rockhampton.

However, Palmer, persistantly accused of reluctance to bring about the rail link between Brisbane and Ipswich, had the satisfaction of confounding his critics by having this important section of only twenty-four miles (39 km) actually under construction just one year before he

and his Ministry succumbed to political pressure. Although a survey of the proposed route the railway should take had been carried out on at least two previous occasions by respective governments merely as propitiatory gestures to clamouring Brisbane people, yet another survey was ordered. This time it was followed by a gala day at Ipswich, and the turning of the first sod. The Marquess of Normanby, then Governor of Queensland, wielding a bright shining shovel, threw aside a piece of dirt to the accompaniment of great cheering from a large gathering. Those from Brisbane, elated that their rail isolation was to end, cheered lustily. Ipswichites, seeing the standing of Ipswich as a marine centre for the west slipping away, applauded the event with no great spirit. Anyway, the Marquess assured the gathering that bad times had passed, and prosperity was rampant.

Started on the way with such encouraging words on 30 January 1873, it took until 1875 to bring the track to Oxley Point, on the south bank of the Brisbane River, where it remained a terminus until 1876 while awaiting the building of a bridge across the River. The first passenger train left Oxley Point for Ipswich on 20 February 1875, and the line was officially opened on 14 June. Passengers from North Brisbane, the main part of the metropolis, enjoyed a bracing trip by boat or punt across the River to catch the first train of the day at six-thirty. This co-ordinated service continued until the bridge was erected in 1876. Known as Indooroopilly Bridge it was officially opened in July of that year. Seventeen years later, during the great flood of 1893, it was washed down stream but replaced in 1895 by the imposing product of engineering skill that carries trains across the Brisbane River today.

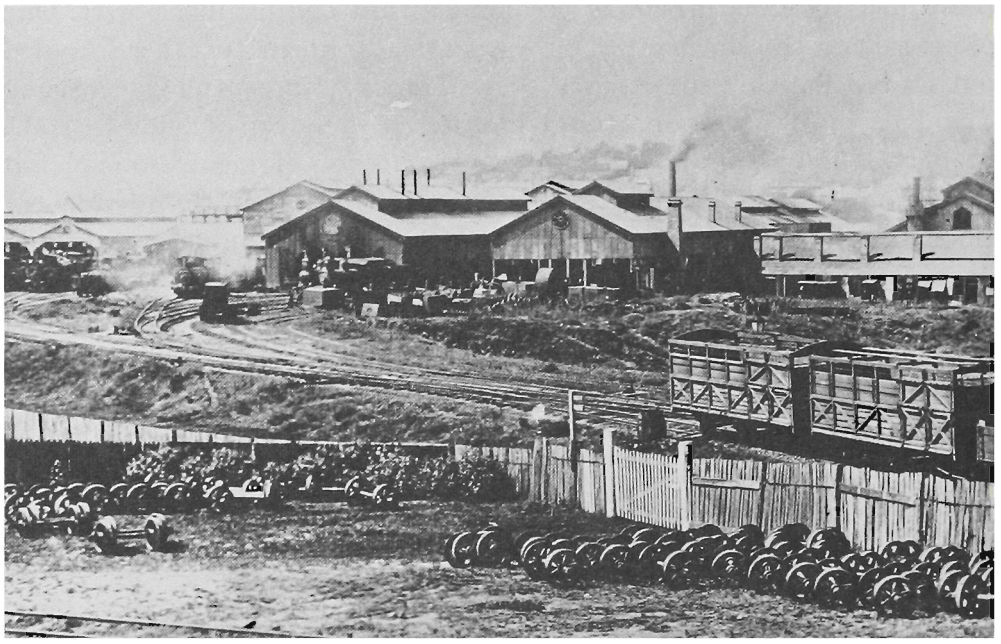
It could have been that the slow progress made with the Brisbane-Ipswich connection, over such a short distance and stopping within a river crossing of the desired destination, assisted in bringing about Palmer's downfall in 1874. Despite bullying and strongarm tactics, his Government was out and Arthur Macalister was once more Premier as from 8 January 1874. Strange to relate, Macalister had been Palmer's Minister for Works in the prior year. Palmer was the boy to use up such ministers; apart from Macalister three came and went in his four years – W. H. Walsh (he lasted the longest, three years); J. M. Thompson and T. McIllwraith, with Macalister, shared the honour in 1874. As Premier, Macalister brought in H. E. King as his Minister for Works. It was certainly tough going to hold this portfolio. No doubt they, and engineers-in-chief who usually found themselves ousted with

a change of government, were sitters to be made the scapegoats for blame when harsh criticism was directed to alleged faults and failings in the building of railways. Railway commissioners had far better luck. Commissioner A. O. Herbert, who supplanted the glib-tongued rogue Abram Fitzgibbon in 1864, hung to the commissionership until 1885. During that period of twenty-one years many hundreds of miles of railway were put down and weighty problems of administration presided over.

Arthur Macalister had promised that if returned he would ensure a rapid advance in railway construction. However good his intentions in this regard may have been, he had little time to give effect to them to any great extent, for he and his Ministry were back in the wilderness in 1876. He did, nevertheless, initiate plans, if not the actual work, for new railway construction. A survey was put under way for a line from Maryborough to Gympie, and also for one from Bundaberg north to Mount Perry with its copper mine. Some progress was made with the Sandgate connection, and attention was being given to getting a railway from Maryborough out to Burrum and its coal. Over 800 miles (1287 km) north from Brisbane, at Townsville, and further north again, there were strong demands for railways. Inland from Townsville, at Ravenswood, diggers had started to reap rewards of gold after the first rush there in 1868, and further on at Charters Towers the quickly growing gold mining town awaited rail transport too. And out beyond in central and far western north Queensland were increased numbers of mining and pastoral communities calling for attention and improved transport facilities. A survey of the first section of the Great Northern Railway, from Townsville inland to Reid River had commenced. One man who, at the time, would be pressing hard for this railway to be built was John Murtagh Macrossan – a digger from the Ravenswood goldfield who was elected to Parliament in 1873 as the representative for the district of Kennedy. A staunch champion of the miners, Macrossan had a strong personality and was a forceful speaker who played an outstanding role in the House and in various ways left his mark distinctly on the pages of Queensland's early history.

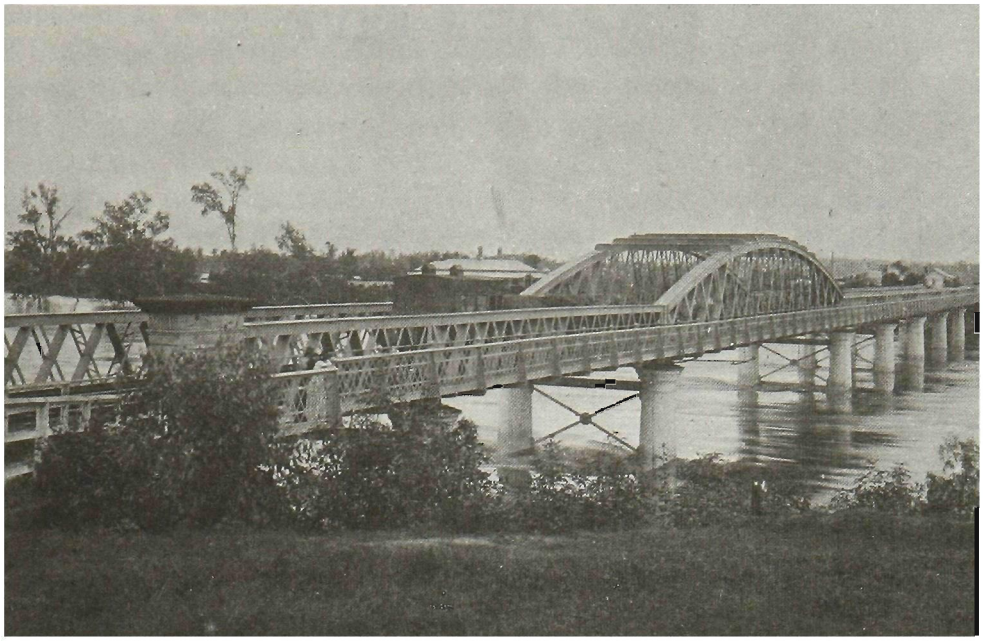
It was during the period that Macalister was Premier that the third type of locomotive began entering the railway service in increasing numbers. This was the B12 type, and were supplied by several makers – Kitson, Avonside, Dubs, some were assembled at the Government Workshops at Ipswich. A total of twenty-five had been put into service by 1882. Whereas the two preceeding types had four driving wheels

these had six thus providing greater traction and hauling power. One pioneered on the Normanton railway in the far north. Another trundled out its last days on the Aramac Shire Tramway in central Queensland. The B12 must have appeared a monster to the eyes of one Mr. H. C. Stanley, who was in the traditionally insecure job of engineer-in-chief at that time. With the arrival of the first B12 he promptly advised the Locomotive Superintendent that "it was practically useless, as well as dangerous, to put such a heavy engine together and on the road because the road was not fit to bear it." They were running about, and in later life in shunting yards, until the 1920s.

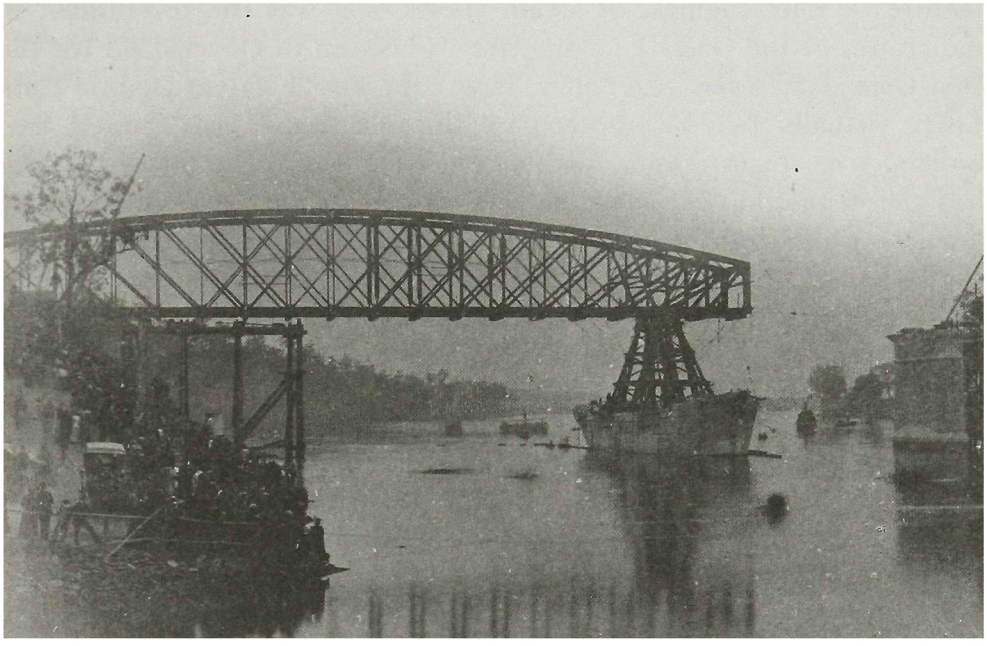


The old Ipswich Railway Workshops. In 1903 workshop activities were transferred to the present site and this building, which had become inadequate, was demolished. In 1965 the workshops were employing 2500 employees. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

Sugar cane train on two foot gauge railway in North Queensland. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



The Indooroopilly railway bridge built in 1876 was destroyed by flood in 1893. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



Construction of new Indooroopilly Railway Bridge which replaced the original structure washed away in 1893. This bridge was opened in 1895 and is still in use today. This picture shows a crowd of people on the bank of the Brisbane River watching the bridge span being floated into position on the tide. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

Chapter Five

To all the prize is open, but only he can take it
Who says with Roman courage, I'll find a way, or make it!

J. G. Saxe

On 5 June 1876 the Macalister Government was out and Mr. G. Thorn was Premier. But he could hold the fort for only nine months. On 8 March 1877 Mr. J. Douglas came in as Premier and with his mates held Parliament together until the beginning of 1879. On Thorn taking up as Premier in 1876 he and his, not for long, Minister for Works, Mr. H. E. King, were in time to welcome another type of railway locomotive, and one of the most unusual in design. It could be said that in its main feature — four engines, or steam chests — it was the forerunner, in miniature, of the Garratt locomotive to be seen in Queensland for the first time sixty-seven years later. It was the Fairlie Patent Double Tank Loco, virtually two locomotives on the one frame, two funnels, two boilers, two steam domes, with one driving cab in the middle. It also had the distinction of being the first to have steam valves actuated by outside, Walschaert, gear. Only one was put to successful use (although similar models of this type were built by the Vulcan Foundry and put into service) in October 1876. Capable of hauling a load of 120 tons (122 t) up the Toowoomba Range, this certainly was a monster by Engineer Stanley's reckoning.

The fleet of locomotives was quickly building up. When J. Douglas took over the reins of Government in 1877 a different type of loco, the A12, was being put into service. This caused no worry for Douglas's Minister for Works, the Honourable G. Thorn who, almost immediately, handed the position on to W. Miles. The poor struggling railway, if it was not hampered by the rapid turn round of the top administration post, it was certainly not helped. Railway Commissioner Herbert would have received little ministerial assistance from 1876 to 1879 for, in that short period, no less than five people held, and quickly dropped, the portfolio of Minister for Works (and Railways). They were: J. R.

Dickson; H. E. King; G. Thorn; W. Miles; and S. W. Griffith.

Despite all this disorder up top, development in the railway department continued, equipment and rolling stock was being augmented and progressive surveying, followed by track laying, proceeded.

From 1877 to 1890 eighteen of the A12 (Baldwin) class locos, built in the United States of America, were brought in. Between 1890 and 1891 the Brisbane firm of Evans, Anderson and Phelan, & Company, put together another twenty-five. These had six driving wheels coupled, an improvement on the first batch with only four wheels providing traction. They were added to by several C13 and C15 Baldwin types from the United States. The figures indicate, in inches, the diameter of the steam cylinders and as both these types had increased tractive power with eight coupled driving wheels the locomotives were coming with greater hauling ability and loads of trains could now be increased. The Baldwins, and those locally-made, had long lives. One of the last, if not the last, to retire was handed back to the railway department from the Mount Cuthbert Smelters, out from Cloncurry, in the Mount Oxide area, where it was running around the smelters into the 1920s. One of the enginemen who manned it on the run to the Cloncurry depot that day remembers the lousy trip with boiler priming, poorly steaming, and odd bearings running hot. The smelters had closed down and the loco had been left to stand abandoned and almost forgotten for quite a time.

The Douglas Ministry, after one year and ten months, gave place to Thomas McIlwraith and his party. Tom, a little later, was patted gently on the shoulder with a sword by Royalty and thereafter had to be addressed as Sir Thomas. It was Sir Thomas McIlwraith, who, when premier of Queensland in 1883 and inbued with strong imperial instincts, had his magistrate at Thursday Island annex eastern New Guinea for Britain – but he was ordered to put it back.

Taking over as premier on January 1879, Thomas McIlwraith had John Macrossan sworn in as his Minister for Works and Mines (the portfolio swung from Works and Lands to Works and Mines to suit the times – with responsibility for Railways added). Macrossan had already become an outstanding member of McIlwraith's team, and the fiery little ex-miner came to office with implanted animosity to Samuel Griffith, whom he had supplanted as minister. John's distrust of Samuel was so strong that he was wont to say inside and outside the House that the word of Griffith on anything was worthless. He baited Griffith

often. Should Griffith be speaking in the House, and quote from Hansard, Macrossan would interrupt and ask for the page number of the matter quoted, and would then take from the table a similar Hansard and make a show of checking to see if Griffith was quoting accurately. Members were greatly amused.

With McIlwraith's Government came a few years of stability in Parliament, and the railways got a minister bent on kicking the railway building ahead by all means possible. Macrossan's attitude to the control of mining, and the well-being of miners, was a firm one. Small physically, but looming large as a brilliant debater, endowered with a marvellous memory, unswerving in his convictions, he earned respect from both friend and foe. On two occasions prior to becoming a member of the Cabinet he tried unsuccessfully to have an Act brought in for the regulation of mines. In 1880 he succeeded. This Act is recognized as a most important contribution at that period to industrial legislation.

From 1879 onwards railway lines began sprouting from a number of localities and, like vines pushing forward across vast fields, steel rails slowly snaked their way out to open new horizons of glowing promise. Queensland, with the rest of Australia, had entered an era portending continually expanding prosperity, and ever growing wealth. Production in all sections was increasing manyfold. Money could be spent with ease where pennies counted before. Macrossan, battling always for the north, succeeded in having the Great Northern Railway Bill passed by Parliament, and construction of the line began in Townsville in 1880.

On 6 August 1881 a grand day of celebration was held at Maryborough. Premier McIlwraith, supported by his Cabinet Ministers, and a number of members, was there to officially declare the Maryborough-Gympie railway open. The politicians all journied to Maryborough by boat. Leaving Brisbane on Thursday they arrived Friday, had a big day Saturday and departed Sunday. Not long after the short line to Burrum was in operation.

From Theebine, only a short distance north from Gympie on the Maryborough-Gympie line, a railway had advanced a little inland by 1881. This line was to tap the lower Burnett River district with its rich fertile soil and abundant valuable timber. Already, after being penetrated and settled since the very early pioneering days, cattle raising and farming communities were quickly growing and flourishing there. Gayndah, further north on the bank of the Burnett River and right in the centre of this fertile district, demanded a rail link. A long drawn out

tug-o-war in political circles over the construction of this link commenced in 1881, not to be settled until some years later, whilst Gayndah people, on the side line, impatiently awaited the helpful railway.

In 1881 chief contenders in this contest as to where the railway should commence were Mr. W. H. Baynes, Member for Burnett, whose electorate took in Bundaberg on the Burnett River, ten miles (16 km) from its mouth; Baynes was plugging for Gayndah to connect by rail to Mount Perry, just north of Bundaberg. Mr. W. G. Bailey, Member for Wide Bay, which embraced Maryborough, was pulling with everything he knew to have the line shoot out from a little place called Miva, a few miles inland from Theebine, thus connecting Gayndah directly with the Maryborough-Gympie railway. The line was ultimately laid from this railway but commencing closer to Maryborough than ever Mr. Bailey sought. But this did not happen until later and after much wrangling in Parliament.

At the other end of the Colony in Townsville, so remotely cut off from the south that little was known of the important events taking place there, a start on the building of the Great Northern Railway inland from that seaport had actually begun towards the end of 1878. Its first destination was the Charters Towers gold mines and the line would pass within twenty-five miles (40 km) of the Ravenswood field where reef gold had followed alluvial after the first few prospectors came and proved the worth of the find in 1871. Although commenced, the railway track laying from Townsville got away to something of a false start.

At the time Townsville had such Government buildings as the barracks for receiving the hopeful immigrants; a hospital; a small administration centre and store house all sited among the low sand dunes and salt pans of Magazine Island (an island when the tide came in), on the south side of Ross River, near its mouth. In accordance with the original survey, the track laying had set off from there.

By 1879 it was well on the way. The several hundred navvies, most newly-arrived from poor, suffering old Ireland, had recovered from the tormentingly itchy nights and days filled with buzzing, stinging mosquitoes and silent nipping sand flies (biting midges) as the rails were laid over the first few miles, across the sloppy salt falts to Ross River. Their soft hands had become nicely calloused, and protective corns had replaced the early tender blisters, born of burning friction between flesh and handles of picks, shovels, crow-bars, axes and adze. Then

came the rumour that they had commenced the railway from the wrong place.

On the north bank of Ross River, hugging the base of Castle Hill, the Townsville business community had settled. From there came a murmuring protest. Barely noticed at first, it swelled in a loud voiced objection to the rail terminus being at Magazine Island which left the commercial centre cut off from the railway by Ross River. A petition, backed by the mayor, demanding that a rail link from Flinders Street in the business centre to the existing line be put down, was sent forward. Finally Brisbane sent up the engineer in charge of surveys. Following his report Flinders Street got a railway station, Ross River was bridged, and a connecting line built. The rails from Magazine Island remained as the jetty road.

As 1880 dawned, the main line was going forward again and the section of thirty-six miles (58 km) to Reid River was opened by the mayor of Townsville on 20 December of that year. It was not until 9 November 1881 that the line reached another nineteen miles (31 km) to Ravenswood Junction (now Mingela). The track had been carved over the Haughton Range, with much blasting by dynamite. Overlooking deep chasms, the navvies stumbled about over the rubble, sweating as they formed a road bed with their picks and shovels.

In a fitting manner the miners at Ravenswood celebrated the coming of a railway to within twenty-five miles (40 km) of their diggings. Their rejoicings were even greater when a branch line from the junction came in 1884. A double function welcomed the railway and farewelled Cobb & Co., with a public presentation to the popular driver, Martin Warneminde, who had handled the coach between Ravenswood and the junction.

On 14 July 1882 the main line was at the Burdekin River ready to cross the low level bridge spanning that stream. A small township was to spring up here, taking the name of Macrossan after John Murtagh Macrossan, one-time Ravenswood miner turned politician. The original bridge, subject to even minor flooding, served until 1896 when it was replaced by a high-level steel structure.

The last fourteen miles (23 km) of track to Charters Towers was at last down and officially opened on 4 December 1882 with a day abandoned to merriment and wild celebration by the Towersites. Mines closed down and all business came to a standstill as all gathered to cheer the arrival of locomotive *Pioneer,* now a "Northener", gaily decorated, brass fittings gleaming, as it brought its train of tiny passenger coaches

to the station as visible evidence of the beginning of this new era of progress. Departing cheers, with thanks and good wishes, were raised for Cobb & Co., whose coaches must move further westward to continue serving people in isolated places until the brazen iron horse pushed them on again, with the warning that the grey evening of their day of sustained glory was drawing in.

Track laying halted at Charters Towers for some time. This was considered to be a suitable rail head and depot, for the traffic from the Diamantina, Upper Barcoo and other pastoral areas of the interior. Charters Towers remained the rail head whilst Parliament dithered with a vision splendid in railway building – a line to run direct from Roma, in the south-west, through western Queensland and terminating at Port Parker in the Gulf of Carpentaria, opposite the Mornington and Wellesley Islands. The railways reaching out from Rockhampton and Townsville were to link up with this "Transcontinental Line". An option to construct this truly praiseworthy project had been given to a group called the Australian Transcontinental Railway Syndicate, with payment in the form of land grants at so much land per mile of line laid.

But land grants and syndicates coupled to railway building found no easy acceptance among politicians. Those whose interests ranged with the squatters did their best to squash objections. Those who stood on the other side of the economic fence, particularly with commercial undertakings in Brisbane and Rockhampton, were very suspicious of the ultimate intentions behind this move to have a railway passing like an economic pipeline through the vast and richest pastoral areas of the Colony and terminating at a sea port in the extreme north. Disagreement in the House was great and after recurring debate around the projects' several features, it was pigeoned-holed, although never forgotten. It is continually regretted by the many who give it thought that this line, with its obvious value in several respects, has never been built. For one thing it would pick up the loose ends of the separate railways that run from our east coast for hundreds of miles inland only to end like suddenly bitten off fingers beyond which patient, hard-living people awaited vainly their civilizing touch. Whether the line should have been built in the years gone by at the cost of grants of land of 10,000 acres (4040 ha), or thereabout, for each mile of track constructed is another matter for thought.

It was in 1882, prior to the opening of the important railway to Charters Towers, that the far north, out from Cairns, experienced an

invasion by many politicians. The earliest settlers – such as Ezra Firth who could have been the first when he came to Mount Surprise in 1864, bringing with him a few head of cattle and a flock of sheep, (which he shore on the way at Rockhampton) – were the first to come to the Etheridge district, but the prospectors began drifting in, and soon it was found that the earth was almost bursting with rich minerals. On the Hodgkinson River, under frowning Mount Mulligan, the rush of wealth seekers who came after the first discoveries of gold in 1876, began a most rewarding, although comparatively short, period on this field. Further north, out from Cooktown, the Palmer River goldfield was already a rip-roaring place, after first being rushed in 1873. Gold to the value of over £1M ($2M) had been torn from the earth within the first twelve months. Out in the rugged country of the Etheridge district, west of Herberton, there was gold and Georgetown was to become its centre. The Herberton area was becoming famous for tin and later copper. The first tin was mined in 1879, and the field also held lead and zinc. Over at Croydon, ninety-five miles (158 km) in from the Gulf town of Normanton, one of Queensland's richest gold finds was flourishing and at one stage fifty-eight hotels were kept busy catering to the dry throats of the thousands of miners. Further west at Cloncurry, where in 1867 Ernest Henry had discovered a little gold and then much copper, the fast growing township had small satelite communities springing up around it profiting from a land richly endowed with copper. In the Irvinebank area, just out from Herberton, tin, with its accompanying metals, abounded. There was copper to the north at Chillagoe and coal at Mount Mulligan. But transport was the bugbear. From all quarters came the cry for railways.

And so the politicians came, early in 1882, to see, hear, and talk. As well as being drawn into the far north (over the most atrocious of tracks that were far from earning the name of roads) by the strong demands for railways and the desire for first-hand knowledge of the reported fantastic development in mining and other activity, there was the instinct for political survival as a general election was coming up. The local MLA's had promised a railway from Port Douglas to the Hodgkinson area as the first section on the way to the Etheridge district. Port Douglas, from 1877, had become a very busy point of entry for an increasing number of new arrivals, who then travelled inland over a roughly made, bumpy, bruising track. An earlier attempt to open up a track from Cairns into the mining fields had to be abandoned. The problem of getting over or around the challenging rugged Cairns Range

was too great.

The MLA from Charters Towers, Mr. F. H. Stubley, came on a visit and expressed support for the railway. He was followed by the Member for Cook, Mr. F. A. Cooper, also advocating an inland line from Port Douglas. Then came the big shots from Brisbane. The Opposition Leader, Mr. Samuel Griffith, arrived with Mr. Will Miles, one-time Minister in charge of railways, and, as he hoped, soon to be back in that job. Hard on their heels came the Premier, big Tom McIlwraith, all experiencing the joyless ride overland from Port Douglas. Each one told the people of his concern for a railway to be built. Premier McIlwraith spoke of having "land grant" railways constructed, but Griffith quickly went into attack by proclaiming publicly that he would have no railways provided by land grand syndicates, or built by coolie labour. The latter remark was a good vote-catcher because of the antagonism of the whites against the unfortunate, and so little understood Chinese, who were coming to the mining fields in increasing numbers. Another who came to look the situation over was the then Minister for Mines, with the responsibilities of railway affairs added, Mr. John Macrossan. As an ardent northerner he was certainly pushing for early railway construction. He had no leanings towards land grants, and a definite "thing" against the Chinese, whom he described as invaders. A prejudice described as racist today.

The question of where a railway to the interior should start became highly contentious. People in three different sea ports fought for it. At Port Douglas a Railway League was set up. Cairns too was demanding a railway, despite the handicap of their nearby Range. Further south, at Geralton (later Innisfail), with Mourilyan Harbour as close neighbour, a Railway League was formed after a visit by Mr. Christie Palmerston. Palmerston had been commissioned to explore a suitable rail route from Herberton to the coast. And so the battle for a railway inland was between Mourilyan Harbour, Cairns and Port Douglas, with no holds barred, political or otherwise.

Christie Palmerston and party started out for Mourilyan Harbour on their route-finding expedition. Palmerston was inclined to favour a railway from this point. The trip must have been a most unenviable experience, according to the terse, but graphic description presented by Christie! "Arrived May 28, fearful trip. 19 days rain without intermission. No chance of road. 20 days without rations, living principly on roots. Party safe, but suffering from sores. Track marked out." After all this Palmerston was delivered an atrocious blow by the responsible

Divisional Board, concerned with the track finding, which defaulted on the payment he was due. His bitter feelings can well be imagined. Always a strong advocate for a railway to the coast by the route he and his party had painfully hacked out, he renounced all interest in the hotly contested project.

Ultimately the Barron Valley route was selected. In due course, despite dissention in the House over appropriation of the necessary funds, the requisite Bill was pushed through the Chamber. The railway was to run from Cairns over the Range, on to Mareeba and then to Atherton, finishing at Herberton, in the great tin mining district. In its first years the line was known as the Herberton Railway – a railway to be the Colony's most costly in terms of money and human lives.

It was not until 1886–87 that the actual building of this line commenced. The time-consuming survey of the track – scrambling up the heavily timbered Range, sneaking along the top of sharply falling, deep rocky chasms – had first to be carried out. And the Government was already deeply committed to railway construction in districts elsewhere, with fund raising for the railways now a very weighty and constant concern.

A railway to the coast from the wealth-giving Palmer River goldfield stood high in priority as traffic in and out had to go by way of Cooktown. The field was swarming with tens of thousands of miners: a large percentage of whom were Chinese who at times suffered physical violence from the white population. On the other hand, along with the whites, the Chinese were subject to attacks from the Aborigines, savage in their resentment against the strange intruders who came with cruel hostility to deprive them of the tribal lands that gave them birth, fragment their tribes, and tear asunder a cultured way of life that had withstood time immemorial.

Cooktown became the second busiest seaport in Queensland during those hectic days, and ninety-four hotels shared in the prosperity while it lasted. The wagon trail out to the diggings was a treacherous one with the possibility of ambush by the natives always a hazard. But, in spite of the great need, it was 1885 before a railway from Cooktown was started.

During the interim the Government had once again changed hands. The 1883 elections saw Samuel Griffith and company oust Thomas McIlwraith and his henchmen. Griffith took over as Premier on 13 November 1883. His friend, Will Miles, relieved John Macrossan of the ministerial portfolio embracing railways. But the outspoken, energetic

Macrossan stayed to annoy and cross swords with Griffith, before accepting appointment as Colonial Secretary, and playing an important role – second to Sir Henry Parkes, some say – in the movement for Federation. And even here Macrossan was to run in chaffing harness with Griffith, for Griffith was deputy chairman to Sir Henry Parkes chairmanship of the March 1891 convention of colony representatives when proposals for a Commonwealth of Australia were drafted.

It is interesting to note that over the ten years from 1883 to 1893, with the exception of twenty months from the end of 1888 to the middle of 1890 during which B. D. Morehead was Premier, Griffith and McIlwraith played tug-o-war with the premiership. McIlwraith held the position at the beginning of 1893 by which time both Griffith and McIlwraith had been knighted. Of course the railways had to bear up under the usual tossing around of the railway portfolio of Minister for Railways (it became recognized as such from 1888). Following the Honourable W. Miles came C. B. Dutton, Sir Hugh Nelson and T. Unmack, with Sir Tom McIlwraith bobbing up in the job at the end of 1893, after Nelson had become Premier as from 27 October 1893.

If, seemingly, long periods elapsed between a promise and commencement of construction, and even government bills were passed approving railways, there was certainly some excuse for this. From 1881 to 1894 governments in turn wrestled with an accumulating pile-up of promised railways. Over that comparatively short stretch of thirteen or fourteen years more than 12,000 miles (19,308 km) of railway track had been laid, some 500 miles (800 km) of which were branch lines. In fact, so engrossed were the respective governments in railway building, with so much time and concern being given by politicians to the unceasing battle for the attainment of high political honours, the wonder is how more than bare attention could be given to the many other weighty affairs of a young colony. Railway lines kept creeping out, albeit slowly, in a stop and go fashion to open up new lands in the southern, central, northern and far northern districts. Arguments and dissention in Parliament were interminable with each new railway bill submitted, or even railway line only suggested.

This was never more apparent than in 1881. That year the Southern and Western Railway had run to Roma, and stopped dead. The railway running out to the central west, from Rockhampton, had got to a distance of only 206 miles (324 km) inland. The Great Northern Railway, reaching inland from Townsville, had not then

reached Charters Towers and by November of 1881 it had just struggled up the Haughton Range to Ravenswood Junction (now Mingela), only fifty-five miles (88 km) from Townsville. Now, the distances these three had been taken forward, as the main trunk lines of the Colony, was a matter of importance at the time. It was understood that the three railways would continue to be extended until they each reached a point inland suitable as a junction with the envisaged Transcontinental Line, which was to run through the Colony from Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria. So, things being as they were, with the plans of men all gang agley, railway building halted at Roma whilst Parliament argued matters out. Charleville, 165 miles (265 km) westward from Roma, had been a thriving pastoral centre for years, and was still growing. However, the people of Charleville objected strongly to Roma remaining indefinitely the rail head for western squatters, Roma is 318 railway miles (512 km) from Brisbane, and there was no intention to extend the Roma line to Charleville until the other two railway systems had caught up on mileage.

In the House there was hot debate around the question of coming to some finality with the Australian Transcontinental Railway Syndicate in regard to the proposed line from Roma to the Gulf. Plans had been submitted for railway building further inland from Charters Towers, and there was strong advocacy for the Government, whilst making up its mind on these matters, to extend the railway from Roma to Charleville by the land grants' arrangement. The indecision of the McIlwraith Government on railway affairs was evidenced in the fact that tenders had been called for the construction of the railway to Charleville some time before, but the tenders had been returned when the Government decided to hold up railway construction and look the land grant proposition over.

Some members claimed in debate that the country between Mitchell and Charleville, through which more than half the railways would run, was worthless to offer as land grants. But Mr. Pat O'Sullivan, representing the electorate of Stanley, rushed in to poo-pooh the idea of the country being worthless claiming it was as good as any in the Colony. He was strongly supported by Mr. George M. Simpson, from Dalby, who presented reasons in favour of the Government immediately resuming construction on not only the line to Charleville but also the other two in the centre and northern regions. It is evident in the record of this debate that George, in his earnestness and strength of conviction, became angered at the lack of support

coming from his close colleagues, including the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Samuel Griffith. Heatedly he took them to task for the little assistance they were giving in the attempt to have the Government change its views. Turning on the Leader of the Opposition he accused him of being solely concerned in waging an attack upon the Government – to gain political mileage it would be described these days – instead of assisting to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the question before the House.

Despite the eloquent striving of Pat O'Sullivan and George Simpson, Roma remained the rail head for some time. It was not until 1887, and after many miles of railway had been put down in other places, that the Charleville people cheered to the whistling arrival of the first train.

The head-on attacking method adopted by Griffith against the McIlwraith Government, and complained of by Simpson as not being conducive to solving anything, was in line with the wily Griffith's continuing campaign to denigrate McIlwraith and his ministers at every opportunity thus paving the way for them to be replaced at the next election by a government of Griffith's choosing. In 1880 Griffith gave support, in a pretty violent strain, to a petition arranged by a Mr. William Hemmant, and presented to the House by Griffith. The petition contained the charge that the firm of McIlwraith (brother to Premier McIlwraith), McEacharn & Company, had received, without tendering, 3s. 6d. (35c) per ton more for carrying rails from Glasgow to Rockhampton than the firm of Law & Company had received a short time before on a similar consignment. The House of Assembly was told by Griffith that, although he was not the one to first raise the case, he had signed his name to the petition of protest because:

> He considered there was a preconcerted arrangement, and he believed the Colony had been shamefully plundered by a ring of speculators in the London office, and he would say more, and would say it with a full sense of the responsibilities of his position, that he considered, upon evidence, that the Premier connived at it – he would repeat that the evidence showed the Premier connived at it.

The petition, its content and supporting comments made by Griffith, who said he was acting as council for William Hemmant, were brought to the attention of the Legislative Council which elected a Select Committee of enquiry. The Committee got a trip to London out of it as the Committee found it necessary to investigate, on the spot,

the allegations that the Colony "had been shamefully plundered by a ring of speculators in London". On 5 July 1881 A. H. Palmer, then Colonial Secretary, presented the findings of the Select Committee to the Legislative Assembly. All the charges and accusations were found to be without foundation. Griffith came in for a few caustic remarks for the part he played in the case. This brought him to his feet heatedly complaining that the Committee's report was devoted mainly to castigating him. And so ended another time and money wasting incident.

It was a downright pity that the same outraged feelings as shown in regard to businessmen's scramble for trade and commercial spoils were not exhibited in the same place against treatment meted out to numbers of most unfortunate navvies toiling on the railway construction between Dalby and Roma a few years before. Here the same devotion of time and money would have saved much suffering, grief and disaster which extended to whole families with those responsible for their employment, and care, completely ignoring their sad plight until it became truly desperate.

On 17 May 1877 it was left to the Honourable Kevin Izod O'Doherty to draw the attention of the Legislative Council to "a raging attack of fever among the navvies working between Dalby and Roma". He said that at some places seventy-five percent of the men, as well their wives and families, were effected "direfully". He said he had assisted, "with hand in pocket", families brought down, or sent down by rail, and absolutely no provision had been made to put them in hospital, or to relieve them of their distress. He told the House how he had found one family of father, mother and three children "all effected and faint at 10 p.m. on the platform at the railway station, in Brisbane, without a penny for food, shelter, or attention." The family had come down from the railway construction camp only through the assistance of other "servants of the Railway Department" O'Doherty told the House, and he added "such a state of things deserved the most serious attention of the Government" – honourable members "Hear, Hear". He went on to say "This is not a singular case from Dalby, there is suffering of the most intense and heartrendering among our fellow colonists who happened to have dropped upon that special portion of railway line – Dalby to Roma."

A haggling debate ensued over where the responsibility for this outrageous lack of concern for human beings rested. There was strong contention that the responsibility was on the contractors to care for

their employees. One member wished to know why the Central Board of Health was not on the job and doing something about the matter. He was told by a member of the Board that the Colonial Secretary was chairman and as he took no interest in the Board, and rarely attended meetings, the Board really did not function. This member was brave enough to say: "It is a wonder great mortality is not taking place".

George Sandeman sought to swing the spotlight of blame on the workers themselves and claimed that a great deal of illness was caused by the navvies frequenting "shanties" which sold grog without license. He drew the attention of the House to the number of such shanties existing along the line and called on the Government "to suppress the evil by means of the Police." The Honourable George failed to go on and suggest the provision of something better, and less evil, than these rough shanties, dispensing grog of questionable quality, no doubt. The shanties offered the only interlude in the day after day deadliness of the labouring routine in isolated camps. There was no other break from this monotony than that offered, at a high price, by the shanty keepers.

The outcome of it, after some life had been breathed into the Central Health Board, was to have arrangements, of a sort, provided at the camps for the treatment of the sick; but for some it was too late.

Even though the Legislative Assembly gave little consideration to the health and welfare of the men out building railways, where to provide railways, and when, occupied much of their time. In 1879 the first definite move was made to give the south-eastern corner of the Colony a railway system which was to run south from, or near, South Brisbane. Mr. Archibald Meston, from Rosewood, brought the matter forward and had the Assembly agree that "a railway line to South Brisbane would be a great benefit to the southern portion of the Colony." There it rested until Mr. Peter McLean, representing Logan, had it resurected on 22 September 1881 by moving "that the House is of the opinion a line of Railway should be constructed to connect the districts of Logan, Pimpama, Coomera and Nerang with the Metropolis." Peter just did not make it. His motion was defeated twenty to nineteen.

The bug-bear in the building of this line was the starting point. To have it run out from the metropolis meant the construction of a railway bridge over the Brisbane River, right in the city and cost was a determining factor. In the meantime John Macrossan, as the minister concerned, had been working on the matter with the engineer-in-chief and surveyor-general. On 9 October 1882 the Logan Village and Beenleigh

Railway was approved by the Legislative Assembly, with the line to commence about two miles, thirty chains (4 km) from Sherwood (on the Brisbane-Ipswich railway) and run the thirty-two miles (51 km) to Logan Village. When constructed, a spur line at about its twenty-seven mile (43 km) peg was run out a few miles (4 km) to pick up Beenleigh, already an important district with a sugar mill that had been crushing since 1878 at nearby Rocky Point. In the slow process of time the Logan Village line stretched out to Tamborine, with its scenic heights, and then on to the valuable Canungra area. From Beenleigh a line slowly inched its way through the adjoining Coomera grass and timber country on to Nerang, continuing eventually on to Coolangatta at the New South Wales border. The latter portion of this line, which awakened the now world-famous Gold Coast from its age-long slumber, was torn up and sold for scrap in the 1950s by the Country-Liberal Party State Government and the lucrative transport to one of the world's most popular playgrounds was handed on a platter to private enterprise, the most beloved of that government.

The appealing near hinterland of this southern coastline was further opened up later with a railway line connecting Beaudesert with South Brisbane.

If Mr. Samuel Griffith, Leader of the Opposition, could have got his way when final plans for a railway line to Logan Village were being debated it would have been no more than a narrow tram line that was put down. He argued so persistantly for this "steam tramway", as it was called, that Premier McIlwraith, evidently needled beyond tolerance by the irrepressible Griffith, exploded in anger and berated Griffith as a parsimonious nuisance "ready always to advocate building railways cheaper than the Minister and Government, and he says", went on McIlwraith, "make all branch lines at lower cost – steam trams!!!" bellowed the Premier in disgust.

Though politicians disputed, dissembled, proposed then deposed and proposed again, the Colony's railway system managed to keep on expanding, binding the lands with tenuous steel strips, shrinking distances and killing isolation. On 6 October 1881 the survey of a route for a railway from Brisbane to Gympie was approved. Although this was to be the most important trunk line, connecting the capital with its far-flung, and broadly-spreading central and northern districts, the construction was amazingly slow. It was not until 1888 that the first twelve miles (19 km), to Bald Hills, was officially opened. This settlement had experienced a lively growth since the day in 1857 when three families

came with horsedrawn drays from Brisbane and, disputing ownership with hostile Aboriginals, took over their land as "free-hold" property – as arranged in Brisbane – and prepared homes of wattle and daub, plus some bark. When the railway came Bald Hills had a creditable shopping centre and a state school (the fourth opened in Queensland) which had been established in 1866. For years Bald Hills was shopping and schooling centre for the people at Sandgate. G. (Gerry) V. Moriarty, son of the first station master (Edward L. Moriarty) devoted a long life time to the Railway Department and was Commissioner for Railways from 1952 to 1962.

Early in 1882 the line to Sandgate was on its short way, roughly following the route opened up by the Cobb & Co. coaches, through Fortitude Valley, on past what was to be Albion and out to the waiting wine and pineapple centre of the German community at Nundah, reaching Sandgate in 1882.

It was also in 1882, on 19 September, that the House approved the construction of the Rockhampton Wharf Line. An attempt was to be made to develop a deep-water port for Rockhampton at Broadmount near the mouth of the Fitzroy River, but it proved impracticable and Port Alma, further south, became the established marine centre.

One matter of close import to the railway staff in 1882 was the issue by the Commissioner for Railways, Mr. A. O. Herbert, of a new *Book of Rules and Regulations for the Guidance Generally of Officers and Servants, and The Conduct Of Traffic on the Queensland Railways* (in accordance with the provisions of The Railway Act, 1864). This revised and added to the first book of rules and regulations issued in 1865. It enmeshed the growing staff of railwaymen in a little more of the Departmental red tape of do's and don'ts that were to be ever added to from time to time by people retaining the discredited concept of master and servant relationship in employment long after it had been forgotten in private industry.

The first rule in the then-modest manual of but fifty-five small pages instructed "Officers and Servants" to devote themselves exclusively to the Service with zeal and fidelity – and obey promptly all orders received from persons placed in authority. Railway servants were required to produce the *Book of Rules and Regulations* prior to receiving wages. They were prohibited from smoking anywhere upon the railway premises, and so was anyone else, under penalty of £2 ($4).

Railway officers who rendered accounts were required to find security in such manner as the Commissioner saw fit. The innocent

could suffer with the guilty when goods were pilfered, or damaged, and the Commissioner felt carelessness by the staff contributed. If individual neglect could not be traced to the member of staff involved at the station or stations concerned, the whole of the staff was required to dub in and meet half the amount paid by the Commissioner as compensation. The full amount was paid by any individual servant to whom guilt could be sheeted home.

Enginemen were expected to be most zealous and dedicated servants. A driver had to be with his engine thirty, and a fireman forty-five minutes before the "appointed time for starting" to prepare the engine for the job. Every sixth day, or oftener if necessary, it was their responsibility to attend to the somewhat arduous, and dirty, duty of washing out the engine boiler (years later this became the work of a specially classified man). A driver was also expected to perform a certain amount of maintenance work on the engine which rightly came within the category of fitters' duties. Should a big end, or other moving part run hot and result in some damage, such as cutting or scarring of a journal, "the engineman shall pay for the damage, or be dismissed". Drivers and firemen not required their full time on the line were to employ the remainder "under shop rules" at any work which the foreman allotted them.

Guards had to be the acme of gallantry in those days. Rule 145 said "When ladies are travelling alone guards should be attentive to their comfort, place them in the trains, ascertain their wishes, and endeavour, if possible, to select a carriage for them in which other ladies are travelling; if ladies wish to exchange carriages at any station during the journey guards should enable them to do so." – oh me, oh my, how far the drift to modern women's lib movements.

Among the "Bye-Laws of the Queensland Railways", incorporated in the *Book of Rules,* was one warning "Any person found swimming, or otherwise polluting the water in any of the railway reservoirs or tanks, shall be subject to a penalty not exceeding £5 [$10]". The penalty was recoverable before two justices.

Such instructions, even to those who bothered to read them, brought no concern to the railway builders who were then edging the rails into some of Queensland's grandest pastoral lands. The immense holdings in the central-west already, by 1882, grazed hundreds of thousands of sheep – mainly in the interests of Victorian investors, and other southerners who came in the ungoverned years, rolling initial flocks over the border and hastening, with no right of tenure except

audacity, on to the promised land, brutally driving the natives from their paths.

As the year 1883 arrived the rail head had reached Bogantungun, sitting among the ruggedness of the Drummond, Anakie, Zamie and Zig-Zag Ranges, some 228 miles (366 km) inland from Rockhampton. To the north Clermont in the rich pastoral Peak Downs area had gold, and there was copper and coal as well. Clermont received a railway in 1884. Emerald had been a busy centre as the rail head, and it retained its importance as the radiating centre of the Central Highlands until the rails were pushed further west to Bogantungun.

The railway was at last nosing into Arthur Palmer's country, Beaufort Holding, on the Belyando River only a short distance over the Drummond Range from Bogantungun. It was a boom time for pastoralists and a railway meant the end of the heavy freight rates charged by the wagon teamsters that took a lot of the cream off profits.

It was a good year for Mr. S. W. Griffith also. He became Premier in November 1883. After taking over Griffith seems to have given the lie to McIlwraith's accusation that he was all for building railways on the cheap, even to the extent of providing nothing better than miserable narrow gauge steam trams. During the succeeding four and a-half years that Griffith and his party hung on as the Government of Queensland, the regular railway construction continued, some lines were completed, others commenced.

Despite what may have been promised when the politicians roamed around Herberton and other centres of far north Queensland in 1881 when Port Douglas, Cairns and Geralton were competing for an inland railway, it was Cooktown, further still to the north, that got a railway service first. Although for years it had been a busy, roistering port for the Palmer goldfield, there was inexplicable modesty displayed from Cooktown in not entering the lists with the other three centres battling to be the starting point for the main inland line, a battle eventually won by Cairns. Cooktown celebrated the opening of a railway which headed for the Palmer in 1885, but joy soon turned to sorrow. The vagaries of goldfields had not been reckoned with and the field began to peter out. The first section of sixty-seven miles (92 km) reached the river at Laura and stopped, never to advance. The decline of the goldfield meant the rails failed to reach what had been the golden heart of the Palmer.

The railway bridge at the little township of Laura was believed to have felt the weight of a train only once, and it was only a testing train.

But the late Henry G. Lamond, who wrote a great deal about the early history of northern Queensland, much of it from personal experience, pointed out the bridge carried a second train. He wrote with the authority of one who attended school at Laura:

> There was another train which crossed the bridge. A party of high Government officials came by train from Cooktown to Laura, 67 miles [108 km], 3½ hours journey. I don't know what they thought they were doing; but THEY WERE MIGHTY IMPORTANT. There was one little fellow with a pointed beard and a waxed moustache. Someone had told him no train had ever crossed the bridge since the Palmer Goldfield had burst its bubble and the line to tap it had been discontinued immediately the bridge had been completed. And as that was to be the first train which had ever crossed the bridge local inhabitants were wondering if it would stand the strain. And that little bloke with the whiskers was more apprehensive than all the rest put together. He held up the passage of the train until he could be assured it was safe. We youngsters knew the bridge was safe. There was a Chinese gardener who used to trot across that bridge every morning, two baskets of vegetables on the pole across his shoulders, to supply the township. Anyway, the train with the V.I.P. on board went there and back. The fellow with the pointed beard might have written headquarters of the dangers he ran in the execution of his duties.

The Cooktown-Laura train ran a daily service for some years. Gradually this slumped to but one service each week, first as a locomotive with a small train and then as a rail motor; thus ekeing out a precarious existance for many years until its death knell was sounded and the rails were shipped to Japan. The purposeless Laura Bridge defiantly withstood a succession of floods until the early 1960s when, ill-starred and ravaged by time, it fell to the onslaught of its last flood.

Chapter Six

'Twas they who followed up the trail the mountain cattle made,
And pressed across the mighty range where now their bones are laid.

A. B. Paterson

On 10 May 1886, at Cairns, the first sod was turned for the construction of the Herberton Railway. This line was to pass through, as it ran from Cairns to Herberton, scenery of the grandest ever presented by nature. The torture of first surveying and then winding the rails across the 1100 feet (335 m) high Cairns Range, heavily timbered and with deep chasms falling sheer from treacherous spurs, was a challenge to skill and brawn in any period.

It was ironical that this railway should be commenced, and a great deal of it completed, under the premiership of Samuel Griffith, chided by opponents as being a pinch penny railway builder. It turned out to be Queensland's most costly line.

Anyhow, Premier Griffith, supported by a number of parliamentarians, civic leaders and a large gathering of holiday-making citizens was there, with his customary imperturbable assurance, carrying the honours at the turning of the first sod. From all accounts the day was made a truly gala one, with spirits running higher as the day progressed. Highlight of the festivities was the good old fashioned barbecue with a roasted prime bullock, and hogsheads of beer tapped on the spot. There was dancing, singing – and fighting. To preserve some semblance of law and order, as the potency of the grog took over, many arrests were a necessity. An old high-sided punt served to hold the overflow from the little gaol house – and the prisoners kept on fighting.

The first section of the railway, from Cairns to Redlynch and only seven miles (11 km), was to be built by the contractors P. C. Smith and Company, at a cost of £20,000 ($40,000). It was July and the first shipment of railway material had arrived by the time the actual work

commenced. Smith and Company plodded along but, meeting unforseen expenditure and rain, the rails were no more than five miles (8 km) out at the end of twelve months. Smith gave up and handed the work over to McBride and Company. This company quickly found the job was beyond them and they too threw it in. The Government took over the plant and brought the rails on to Redlynch. From this point the construction was taken over by John Robb who had contracted, at the price of £290,000 ($380,000), to get the railway up the Range and over the crest to Myola, just twenty-four miles (39 km) from Cairns. Despite the great odds that at one stage near defeated him, Robb proved himself equal to a project calling for ability, tenacity and not a little courage.

By March 1887 Robb had the work well in hand, had recruited some 600 navvies – mostly Irishmen and Italians – and a great amount of equipment, including the indispensable puffing pioneer, had been brought on to the job. The cost of bringing equipment to Cairns by sea was high and to land a locomotive was around £2000 ($4000).

Making what could be considered good progress, the railway builders were soon working on the first of the fifteen tunnels to be blasted out and formed before the rails could reach Kuranda, sitting prettily in a natural wonderland on top of the Range. With tunnelling gangs working well ahead of the advancing rails, wagons had to clamber, somehow, through thick scrub to deliver material for cementing. The surefooted mule was brought to help.

During 1887 Robb, with his engineer-in-charge Buchanan, had the organization of the plant and staff nicely settled down to a steady operation with rail-laying advancing for engines and wagons to bring up equipment as forward gangs carved out the rail bed. At this stage the Government began bringing in locomotives. Construction of the Cairns Wharf had been completed and equipped with rails: the Wharf and the Cairns-Redlynch railway section had been officially opened in October of 1887. Two new locomotives, the small-wheeled "Moguls" built by Baldwin, were shipped to Cairns. These B11 class fussed about in north Queensland giving great service for very many years.

In 1888 it became clearly evident to John Robb that he had underestimated the stern handicaps to be overcome in building this railway, and costs were rising well beyond expectation. Among the gangs resentment was growing at the daily wage of only 8s. (80c) – the regular payment for railway work less dangerous and laborious. Robb sought a reassessment of the contract price by the Government but

failed to get it. He came back with the proposition that he be relieved of the contract and the Government pay him a reasonable price for his entire outfit, which included a saw-mill set up to turn out railway timbers, and the railway building then to continue as a purely Government enterprise. This approach to the Minister, and Commissioner for Railways, also met with no response. Grumbling, Robb pushed on with the work stubbornly raising, from time to time, the question of more money.

With picks, shovels and dynamite the line was hung around the twists and turns of the mighty gorge, ever climbing until Stoney Creek, with its scenic beauty and challenge to engineering, was reached. Here, fourteen miles (23 km) from Cairns, where the Creek at the height of its grandeur throws crystal clear water in a cascading mass down the face of the gorge, a railway bridge was constructed 674 feet (205 m) above sea level on a sweeping curve, with tall piers of concrete and steel suspending four spans of fifty feet (15 m) each, and three of thirty feet (9 m). It was the middle of 1890 before this was completed, and it called for a celebration. Robb seized the opportunity of inviting the then Governor, General Sir Henry Wylie Norman, who was on a visit to Cairns, to be banquetted on the fine new bridge. No pains were spared in ensuring the success of the function.

The Governor and his entourage came in a carriage coupled to the front of the shining and decorated loco. The less distinguished, but still privileged to be invited, sat on forms in railway trucks towed behind the loco. The bridge, which still required a little more work, had a floor placed over the sleepers to provide a suitable area on which the guests, sheltered by a canopy, were seated at the long, well-laden table. The area was enclosed with safety railings. And the party feasted, toasts were honoured, speeches endured, as the tumbling, laughing waters of Stoney Creek threw a rainbowed spray on one side while, on the other, the banqueters eyed a panorama in glistening shades of green as the tree-clothed gorge fell sharply from beneath the picturesque bridge.

By coincidence, or design, the party was thrown by Robb just about the time he succeeded in having his contract money increased by £21,000 ($42,000), although this was but a tenth of the amount he had been haggling for. He was to later institute proceedings against the Commissioner for Railways for alleged failure to pay all monies due to him.

The navvies had been pressing a claim for the daily rate of pay to be increased to 9s. (90c) per day. They finally settled for 8s. 6d. (85c).

The union-conscious among them had begun the formation of the first railwaymen's union in north Queensland. Appropriately it was called The United Sons of Toil. It played an important role in the lives of the railway builders for quite a time, and became an affiliate of the Australian Labour Federation that had arisen from the fast-growing union movement in the south.

When the rails were close to Barron Falls, about two miles (3 km) from Kuranda, Premier Griffith came to look the railway over. His arrival at Redlynch was made gay by a decorated arch under which his train travelled. A railway ballast wagon carried him to the end of the line, but Griffith had a walk of a mile (1.6 km) or so before he could enjoy the grand display of the Barron River sending its broad mass of water plunging in splendour down a precipice of over 800 feet (244 m).

Did Griffith ponder on the heavy price paid by the railway builders in making it possible to view that attractive scene? Death, ready to claim the least unwary, had been haunting the ranks of the builders since they began to tame the mighty gorge. Working on the heaviest of tasks for at least ten hours day after day, and surrounded by hazards from which there was little protection, the number of tragic accidents kept mounting. If the extra 6d. (5c) grudgingly added to the daily wage was "danger money" those poor sons of toil sold their lives ever so cheaply.

Three men were killed in one tunnel and seven in another by falls of earth. A premature explosion when blasting rock injured seven men. Another plummetted to his death in the Barron River. Three were burned to death, and another severely injured when burning off fallen timber. When going forward to investigate a dynamite charge that had failed to explode, two workers met the full blast of it. One or more met death by falling trees. A capsized railway trolley killed one. One death, if not more, was caused by tumbling boulders. The waters of Stoney Creek claimed one man after he accidently slipped in. Falling from a high cutting a man suffered a fractured skull and died as a result. When trying to cross the Barron River above the falls another life was sacrificed when the river grabbed the man and threw him down to death waiting among the swirling water and rocks below. A drayman was crushed between his dray and a stump. John Robb, the boss, was fortunate not to have his name added to the grim list when a railway tricycle he was riding overturned. If over thirty lives were lost, as per record, in laying the railway from Redlynch to Kuranda and then to Mareeba, a total distance of but thirty-nine miles (63 km), there are

those who say that some deaths were never recorded.

To one taking this train journey and knowing the history of the building of the line, a thought must surely be spared for the many who gave lives to make an entrancing journey possible. The death toll reflects heavily upon those in authority who were responsible for the safety of the men they hired. No monument, or even modest cairn, was thought of to remind posterity of an obligation.

How strange are the ways of humans! At the other end of the State, and not far from where fever hit the navvies taking the line towards Roma in the south-west, there stands, not far removed from the railway, a monument to an insect – cactoblastis moth. It forfeited life to starvation after gorging on prickly pear (spreading as a menace throughout the land) until the last plant had vanished. Private enterprise commemorated the freeing of private property from the land choking pear.

As the construction was nearing Kuranda, with major difficulties left behind, many navvies were being discharged as redundant labour and suddenly found themselves without a job in a locality where alternate work was non-existent until the next section of railway construction was commenced, under a different contractor. They were joined early in 1891, shortly before the rails reached Kuranda, by men paid off when a serious structural fault appeared in No. 15 tunnel. Work was suspended and the men summarily discharged to cool their heels in unemployment for a full four months whilst inspections were made and long discussions regarding remedial measures to adopt took place. The commissioner came, bringing his engineer-in-chief, to enter the "dialogue" before work was re-commenced and the navvies back on the job after existing, somehow, in the interim without their 8s. 6d. (85c) per day. It was in No. 15 tunnel that seven of them were entombed until carried out dead by frantically digging mates.

But, in April 1891 a panting locomotive drew the first train into Kuranda. By May Robb had completed his contract by bringing the rails a further three miles (5 km) to Myola. High was the cost in terms of money, but by what accounting does one reckon the dreadful cost in human lives and suffering on the way?

The section Redlynch to Myola, a little short of seventeen miles (27 km), was officially opened for regular railway traffic in June 1891 (one year behind time) with a complete absence of ceremony. No fanfare of trumpets, no holiday declared nor banquetting, no grand speeches of thanks for a job well done under atrocious conditions, no

words of condolence for the loss of dear ones and breadwinners. It was left to Commissioner Andrew Johnston to issue a formal declaration that the line was open for business.

It was when this section of line was nearing completion that the then chief engineer in north Queensland, G. H. Annett, seemed as though he might be in a bit of bother in connection with the letting of contracts for railway bridge material. Complaint was raised in the House that Annett when inviting tenders for iron and steel work for railway bridges had advised contractors to submit quotes for both "manufactured in Colony and in England" despite a decision of Parliament that preference be given to material manufactured in the Colony. After a deal of talk, Annett was put in the clear by Minister T. Unmack who produced an instruction to the effect that preference was to be given the local stuff providing price did not exceed that imported by more than twenty per cent. And the House was told it was by inviting quotes for both that relative prices could be obtained. But sceptics on the Opposition side were never fully convinced that they had not been side-tracked.

Among the stories told of happenings on the Cairns Range railway is the amazing one of the run-away train that cheated tragedy, lurking on every mile of the line in its early days. A timber train careered down the Range completely uncontrolled. Clinging to the rails on the sharp curves, squealing around the crescent-shaped Stoney Creek bridge, clattering through tunnels and swaying madly, smashing derailment was strangely avoided. Running right through to Cairns, it shopped only when, with a mighty wallop, it hit and crashed down the end-of-the-line stop-blocks on the Cairns Wharf.

With John Robb's contract at long last fulfilled, continuation of the railway was taken up by the firm of Sutherland and McKenzie. Employing from five to six hundred men, the railway builders set their sights on Mareeba (first known as Granite Creek) twenty-two miles (35 km) onward from Myola. When the rails reached Mareeba the Herberton Railway was roughly half way to its projected destination, Herberton. It was a long time getting there.

The bargaining power of the navvies must have weakened whilst working on the Mareeba section, for they were back on the old eight bob a day rate of pay. The extra 6d. (5c) paid on the Range was withheld. If the 6d. (5c) had any relation to dangerous, or even extremely arduous work, the payment of this magnanimous sum was little less deserved than when struggling up the Range. On the way to

Mareeba, the entrance to the lovely Atherton Tablelands, the finest of scenery was offering, with a climate little short of perfect, but, for the navvies, it was labour of the hardest with heights to climb. From an altitude of 1100 feet (335 m) at Myola the rails were taken over undulating terrain to over 1300 feet (396 m) at Mareeba. And again death was a close companion.

Before the section was completed the Barron River once more claimed a life; two met their end falling from bridges: one was crushed under a heavy steel girder; a powder monkey fell victim to an unfortunate explosion; when walking across land effected by flood water one man unwittingly entered deep water and drowned. He was the father-in-law of W. (Bill) Murchison, well-known to many railwaymen, first as a railway guard in the Cairns district and then as Mayor of Cairns. Bill, from his early days, was prominent in the north as a unionist with the Australian Railways Union.

The rails were at Mareeba by the middle of 1893 and the section was officially opened on 1 Augus⁺ of that year. Slowly the railway was sneaking outward as relief from the heartbreaking dray and wagon transport coming in from Port Douglas; the misery of this journey could be tempered somewhat by travelling with Cobb & Co. Port Douglas, holding pride of place as major shipping port for the far north since 1876, was fast becoming second in importance to Cairns. The teamsters and Cobb & Co. coaches which travelled Port Douglas to Herberton and beyond now worked out from Mareeba. Forgotten could be the old "Bump" road leading out from Port Douglas with its steep, treacherous, pulls. One who retained crystal clear recollections of early pioneering days in Port Douglas until her death in June 1972, at the age of eighty-eight, was Mrs. Anne (Nance) Kenny. Her dad and mum, Denis and Teresa O'Brien, established the first hotel in Port Douglas and were among the group of people who pledged land as guarantee for the building of the Mossman Central Sugar Mill. Their son, Thomas, was the first white boy born in the Port.

A news item appearing in the *Queenslander* of 17 July 1897 adds further interest to this snippet from the wealth of history surrounding Port Douglas. The item reports the holding of a public meeting in the Masonic Hall at Port Douglas. A large number of selectors attended and the meeting was chaired by a Mr. Carstairs, Douglas Divisional Board Chairman. The meeting was unanimous in deciding "That a deputation go to Brisbane demanding immediate completion of harbour improvements, and that a tramway to Mossman be constructed, under the

Railways Guarantee Act". The sum of £30 ($60) was collected at the meeting to defray the expenses of the deputation. Progress came along a very hard road those days. However, the tramway was eventually provided. It ceased operating in 1959; fickle progress wooed motor transport.

The promise of a railway from Cairns to Herberton was no doubt made in good faith, but to continue on from Mareeba in face of impatient demands from other centres for rail service was another matter. North, west and south of Mareeba the land was revealing to the many incoming settlers an amazing storehouse of wealth: in minerals, in fine timbers; and in most inviting farming and pastoral lands. Settlements were springing up and growing quickly in many places. Railways were the order of the day. But railway building was an expensive game, and it was going on, albeit in stops and starts, simultaneously in each of the three very large districts of the Colony. Assessing priorities was a problem, and often determined not so much by necessity as by political pressure from influencial groups.

Herberton was made to wait until 1910 for its rail link, although in 1903 the rails had run on to Atherton, twenty-two miles (35 km) past Mareeba and only fourteen miles (23 km) short of Herberton. And in the Herberton district and the neighbouring Irvinebank and Chillagoe areas the earth was almost spewing out the mineral bounty. Pity Port Douglas did not win the battle to be the inland railway starting point. Quite likely the line would have been out to Herberton (started early enough it could have served on the way the once busy Hodgkinson goldfield) and bringing advantages to other areas behind the Cairns Range well before John Robb had stretched the rails to the top of the Range. Mastering the Range could have waited.

Anyway, with the rail head at Atherton strong agitation quickly came from interested people there and in Tolga, two train stops away, for a railway into the rapidly developing dairying and timber localities to the east and south, out Malanda way. Atherton and Tolga competed for this branch line. Tolga was favoured and the railway was taken from there a distance of twenty miles (32 km) to the joy of prospering Malanda with its dairy herds. Atherton was appeased by getting a butter factory and retained the status of capital of the Tablelands. Tolga boomed with its saw mills as the rails moved forward tapping great stands of peerless cabinet timbers – rich veneer logs, some too huge to pass through the railway tunnels. A log could have a great sliver run off its beautiful girth, and perhaps thrown away, to ensure its passage by

rail. There is the story of a great cedar log travelling as a complete wagon load, something not unusual, but this one jammed in a tunnel and had to be thrown off the wagon to the side of the line. Those who have roamed the far north of Queensland would agree with authoress Jean Devanny who, after seeing for herself, wrote in her book *By Tropic Sea and Jungle*: "I very much doubt if lovelier timbers than ours exist in the world . . . the timbers of tropical Queensland should make this State famous from pole to pole." And to the early settlers this "living wealth" appeared inexhaustable. Henry Lawson said that the Australian idea of home was a weatherboard box and a tank, the early ones among the timber built their boxes with veneer boards.

Whilst the railway was being constructed out to Malanda there were lively times in Tolga. Business boomed, particularly at the two hotels after the railway monthly pay day when the town was beseiged by navvies anxious to be separated from their hard earned money. Arrests as a means of breaking up brawls among the over-indulged became a necessity forced on the lone policeman. With no gaol house, local timber was put to yet another use; a heavy log of fine timber would be subjected to the indignity of having the arrested ones anchored to it from handcuffs until such time as their fervour had evaporated. The story has been passed down that, with a sufficient number imprisoned to the one log, and with wits returning, the log could be lifted and an amble taken to a pub, log and all, for the quaffing of a few drinks before being marched back again to sweat out the pleasure of the law.

Long continued agitation eventually got the railway another eighteen miles (29 km) from Malanda over the beautiful Tableland to Millaa Millaa, but it took until 1925 to get there. Now a railway terminus, it is only twenty miles (32 km) across country from Ravenshoe, which ultimately became the terminus of the Herberton Railway, and twenty-one miles (34 km) beyond is Herberton. While constructing the railway to Ravenshoe the railway builders reached the highest altitude in Queensland, 3165 feet (864 m) above sea level, at Tumoulin, four miles (6 km) before reaching Ravenshoe, at 2969 feet (903 m). Here, in winter, morning light reveals icicles hanging from overhead wires like large glittering pendants. The tools used by railway gangs became so frozen standing overnight that it was the custom, maybe still is, to light fires around them first thing in the morning before attempting to handle them.

Gold had greater power in attracting a railway service than any

other precious metal. Even before the Herberton Railway, that was heading for the tin-enriched Herberton field, had reached the top of the Cairns Range, Croydon, rivalling the Palmer field for gold yield, was beginning to enjoy the benefits of steam transport. Way over at the Gulf of Carpentaria, across from the remarkable Herberton, Einasleigh and Etheridge districts, with mineheads dotting the ridges and flats, Normanton had been invested with the importance and glamour of being a railway centre. In 1889–91 a railway line of ninety-four miles (151 km) had been run out to Croydon, already boasting a history of golden years. The richness of its gold mines, and the hectic tenor of life engendered in Croydon and the twin town of Golden Gate, four and a half miles (7 km) away, could be gauged by the yardstick commonly used to measure the prosperity of a mining town – the number of pubs that flourished. In its heyday Croydon kept forty-eight hotels boisterously busy, and Golden Gate ten. And fifty-eight pubs equates much business.

But those days are now just memories lingering in the malancholy of two ghost towns. The proud little locomotives that shuttled back and forth over the ninety-four miles (151 km) of track were taken away and perhaps still stand, or what remains of them, in some corner of the station yard at Normanton – rusting mementoes of the tough, rough, but friendship-filled yesteryears. Now a far from modern, or custom built, rail motor and trailer makes one return trip from Normanton each week. This modest railway which runs to the mighty Gulf of Carpentaria, stretching for hundreds of miles across Queensland's mainland border on the north, is the only rail service ever provided in the vast area of the Gulf country, the potential of which has not yet even been guessed at.

Since the ghosting of the Croydon goldfield, the responsibility of maintaining the rail service to the tiny population, and a few people along the line, is held by one man with the title of Officer-in-Charge, assisted by a porter and a fettling gang of four men. Holding this job of general factotum when last heard of (in 1972), and for the past number of years is Stan Tuesley – station master, railway driver, mechanic, station clerk, railway public relations man, and any other duty, beyond the calling of porter or fettler, is his. Stan, who came to Normanton from the railway workshop staff at Toowoomba (where he was known to the author), should soon be returning to the queen city of the Downs as retirement time must be approaching. Let's hope the need to replace him at Normanton is not seized upon as an excuse to

close and sell as scrap one more historic, and still not useless, railway. Could be the foreign controlled mining companies moving in to exploit the surrounding bounty, neglected so long, and the increasing number of absentee landholders, or their resident managers on the Gulf pastoral lands, will see advantage in the permanency of this railway (and perhaps its extension). It faces a very uncertain future.

Unique, unlucky Normanton remains a frontier town to lonely cattle runs, with a large percentage of its population – that is well below the one thousand mark – Aboriginals. Two contrasting sights strike the surprised gaze of a newcomer – the tastefully reconditioned stone Shire Hall, constructed at the end of the last century, which retains the old, beautiful cast-iron lace work railing around the verandahs, whilst close by, and practically in the middle of the immensely wide main street stands a windlass-mounted well.

Unlucky Normanton, twice disappointed when almost raised to great importance. In 1890 Sir Arthur Palmer endeavoured with strong argument to resubmit to Parliament the old discarded proposition of a Transcontinental Line to run from Roma to Point Parker on the Gulf of Carpentaria. He pointed out that the considered unsuitability of Point Parker as a finishing point for this line had been a bar to it being built before, but he went on to point out that the members now knew of the "splendid port existing on the Gulf, the port of Normanton." Sir Arthur's proposition was that the Transcontinental be built, and finish at Normanton. He failed to win sufficient supporters to his cause. In 1901 Normanton was right on the jack-pot but again denied the prize. Parliament had before it The Cloncurry Railways Act – (or Port Norman – Normanton – Cloncurry Act), which recommended a railway to serve the Cloncurry copper field in the north-western district of Queensland, and the pastoral lands to the Gulf. The Act was ultimately thrown out, Normanton was left lamenting once more and Cloncurry had to make do with a continuation of the railway line from Townsville, 481 miles (774 km) away. Unlucky Normanton, twice foiled, and the State still lacks a developed port at the Gulf to effectively assist the harvesting of natural wealth. At present Karumba, on the Gulf water and a short distance from Normanton, (Normanton is slightly inland on the Norman River) serves as a miserably-equipped marine centre for crowding trawlers operating among the teeming marine life. From the north comes ever stronger the words that have echoed often down the years since early colonial days "the forgotten North" "the neglected North". The charge, levelled against the

powerful in Brisbane, is comprehensive in scope with all forms of transport in the forefront.

The generations of northerners who have voiced the cry of neglect and of being forgotten can claim to have always been in good company. John Douglas, an early Queensland premier, was on their side, and he knew quite a bit about the north. Port Douglas was named after him, although this, on its own, signifies little for inland from that once busy northern gateway a number of places stumble along carrying names of the one time high and mightly. Not long after his first arrival in the far north, Douglas entered Parliament in 1863 representing the district of Port Curtis. Following the failure of the Thorn Ministry in 1877, Douglas had a crack at being premier for about two years. By 1885 he was resident representative for the Queensland Government at Thursday Island, and spent the rest of his life there. The representative had previously officiated from Somerset, on Cape York. An opinion freely expressed by Douglas was that moving the office from the Cape to the Island (and the pearling base at Somerset was moved too) had been a major blunder showing ignorance and a poor appreciation of the wonderful economic potential of the Cape York Peninsula. The Peninsula offered minerals – gold, for example, was found in places such as Coen, Ebagoolah and Batavia. Although these were not long-booming fields, at one time over 300 miners were at Ebagoolah. The Peninsula also offered pastoral areas with good yearly rainfall, and good stands of timber. Douglas spoke of the advantage a railway through the Peninsula would provide. And this was a long time before the fabulous bauxite deposits in this area were revealed. These deposits go to enrich an overseas owned and dominated company using Weipa as its port. No Australian, black or white, feeling neglected and forgotten or just curious, can gain entry to the mining area except by special permit issued at the sweet will of the company representative.

And still the railway builders, and road builders, wait to be called into this massive slice of Queensland, containing well nigh 100,000 square miles (40,000 ha) of land, a beautiful and richly endowed coast line complimented by the Great Barrier Reef outside, its sleeping hinterland throwing up impressive landscapes from a cornucopia.

Another early entrant into the ranks of the complaining northerners was John Macrossan, that thorn in the side of Samuel Griffith. Macrossan's feelings at what he considered was a rotten deal being dished out to north Queensland brought him, in 1886, to advocate strongly separation from the north, with full autonomy. Apart

from airing his feelings in Parliament he got no satisfaction. In 1890, with railway construction, or the dearth of it, in the north one of his main points of contention, he was battling again and in one of his longest and most biting speeches in the House, moved for separation. Griffith was to the fore in opposing him and with political cunning side-tracked the issue with an amendment: "That it was desirable to have separate legislative authority in Southern, Central and Northern Queensland." Debate, often stormy, ran for four days. It was again a losing battle for Macrossan, divisions showed he could muster only nine votes as opposed to forty.

Nowhere more than in north Queensland have railways, and narrow gauge tramways, constructed privately and by Divisional Boards or Shire Councils, come to the aid of people hard pressed for transport as they struggled with development. The Chillagoe Railway, built to 3 ft. 6 ins. (1.06 m) gauge and maintained over many years by private funds, certainly met no opposition from the Government in 1897 when the proposed project came before the House. The Herberton Railway had reached Mareeba in 1893 and was so tardy in continuing on to Herberton, from where it was hoped branch lines would shoot out to mineral lands beyond, that prominent people in the mining game turned their thoughts to railway construction as a private venture. The Chillagoe copper field, west from Mareeba, was already a substantial producer. A group headed by John Moffat had extensive mining interests in Chillagoe and surrounding mineral fields. In 1897, during the period of H. M. Nelson's Ministry, Parliament had before it: "An application by Chapman, Moffatt and Reid, for authority to construct from Mareeba to Chillagoe a line of railway of about 100 miles [160 km] to a promising mineral district with copper and silver, but at Chillagoe more particularly copper." The feeling of all members was well expressed by the Honourable W. Forrester when he said: "I consider it the biggest throw-in Queensland has ever had during my experience of the Colony – the line opens up 8 already well known mining centres." Approving the application with little debate, members had in mind that the Cairns-Mareeba railway was, up to that time, something of a incubus – it was not paying.

Construction of the line was soon taken in hand, and completed in 1900. It was maintained and the service supervised and operated entirely by staff in the pay of the Chillagoe Company until 1919. Locomotives were either purchased or on loan from the Government.

In 1919 the Commissioner for Railways took over the line – lock, stock and barrel – and the staff. There are railwaymen still around who will remember the disputation about the seniority rights of "the Chillagoe men" in the Queensland Railway Service assessed against those members of the staff to which they were added. It was a good subject to argue for quite some time. Although always called the Chillagoe Line the terminus was actually at Mungana, ten miles (16 km) past Chillagoe, and before its demise a lively copper, with some tin, mining town.

The Colony went through the anguish of three changes of premiers (T. J. Byrnes, J. R. Dickson, A. Dawson) whilst the Chillagoe Line was being constructed, until 7 December 1899, when R. Philp brought some stability to the office. With governments at all times maneuvering among demands for railways, Philip was able to reap the benefit this line gave the Colony – a railway line dovetailing into the regular service, and without cost to the Colony. It had added value in that it could be the main artery for branching veins of railway.

By 1908 a branch line had been constructed from Almaden, eighteen miles (29 km) south of Chillagoe, to Forsayth in the heart of the Etheridge mining field. The incongruity exists still of Georgetown, little more than twenty miles (32 km) out from Forsayth, over easily traversed country, being left isolated from a railway service. And Georgetown, since its bounteous gold mining days, dating from 1870 and continuing for fifty years, has been the largest township in the district and recognized as the provincial capital of the Etheridge. It was saved from becoming a ghost town as mining petered out, as it developed as a centre for wide-spreading pastoral activities but, like Mahomet's coffin that swings between heaven and earth, Georgetown has been left with Croydon mocking it on the west over 100 miles (160 km) of far from first-class roads, and on the other side, almost within cursing distance, is the dangling end of another railway line at Forsayth.

From Lappa Junction, on the Chillagoe railway, another line was taken, south-east, for thirty-three miles (53 km) to Mount Garnet which produced copper and tin, and where Moffat and his company had interests.

At Dimbulah, twenty-seven miles (43 km) out from Mareeba and also on the Chillagoe railway, it was a red-letter day on 19 May 1913 when people gathered to rejoice as the Governor turned the first sod for the construction of a railway line of thirty miles (48 km) north to

Mount Mulligan, the coal mining township shadowed by the grotesquely-shaped mountain dominating jagged-topped ranges. This mountain had brooded over the countless years when it was sacred to Aboriginal tribes, and they called it Woothakata, until it was discovered by the intruding white men who, in their wisdom, bestowed on it a name with vowels that sang less smoothly – "Mulligan", to honour J. V. Mulligan the first to officially record it when he roamed the region in the 1870s. Explorer William Hann, some years before, had given it the name of Mount Lilley out of respect, or gratitude perhaps, for Premier C. Lilley, who held the job for only eighteen months anyway.

Little remains of Mount Mulligan township now except the cemetery. On 21 September 1921 its coal mine suffered the greatest mining disaster in Queensland's mining history. That day, old inscrutable Woothakata trembled to a violent explosion in the mine at his feet. At the time seventy-five miners, almost all the grown male population of the town, were below and seventy-three died instantly. The remaining two, eventually carried out still just grasping life, died soon after of severe injuries and shock. The mine was re-opened but the final blow fell when, in 1957, it was decided the coal seams had reached a stage of being uneconomic to work and the mine was closed. The town was deserted soon after, leaving a cemetery, never needed before 1921, as the grim relic. The railway line, so gaily started, was torn up.

Many years after Port Douglas had lost prestige and the chance of an inland railway system to Cairns, it was ironic that a line should be built from Biboohra – a train stop close to Mareeba – twenty-six miles (42 km) north and finish as a dead-end at a tiny place called Rumula, only about twenty miles (32 km) as the birds fly, from Port Douglas. The line went out to serve the convenience of the then very lively copper and tin mining centre of Mount Molloy.

There is one area, centred in the old township of Irvinebank, out from Herberton, that relied for the whole of its outstanding mineral-producing life on the fine and friendly service provided by a 2 ft. (1.60 m) gauge tramway with its miniature puffing locomotive pioneers. And this not so large mining field became practically encircled by the 3 ft. 6 ins (1.06 m) railway lines running around it to Mount Garnet and Ravenshoe, on the west and east respectively, and part of the Chillagoe line enclosing it on the north. And Irvenbank was of no mean importance in the great era of tin mining in north Queensland with, at one time, two smelters fed from many surrounding mines one of which, the rich Vulcan, claimed to be the deepest tin mine in

Australia. The thumpings of ore crushing batteries were to be heard in a number of localities. Connecting with the 3 ft 6 ins. (1.06 m) railway, the tramway service hustled ore, wood, charcoal, coal and all mining requirements to and fro, transported the wherewithall for the people, and carried them about in the little carriages. The field was declining in the 1920s and by 1927 Irvinebank was left with ghosts, rusting machinery, and caved-in deserted mines. The tramway had been torn up.

Two men who worked as miners at Irvinebank during its flourishing period, and later loomed large in Queensland politics, were E. G. (Red Ted) Theodore and W. (Big Bill) McCormack. Instrumental in fostering unionism on the Irvinebank field, their influence and popularity grew. Pointing the way to workers emancipation they, as many before and since have done (and like the man who went to do good and did very well), found their way to Parliament, emancipating themselves first. Both eventually became Labor premiers, Theodore from 1919 to 1925, McCormack from 1925 to 1929. However, neither endeared himself to the bulk of railwaymen.

The Mulgrave tramway is one that lived on. Some gold had been found on the Mulgrave River in 1879. This brought attention to the valuable commercial timbers in the district, and the land, only a short distance south from Cairns, was seen as suitable for sugarcane growing. The Mulgrave tramway was constructed and opened in 1897, after the Mulgrave Central mill at Gordonvale (then called Nelson), fourteen miles (23 km) from Cairns, had commenced crushing the year before. This tramway ultimately became part of the North Coast Railway – now dignified as The Sunshine Route – running the length of the coast from Brisbane to Cairns.

Great pioneering work was done by the 2 ft. (1.60 m) gauge Ingham tramways in the sugarcane growing lower Herbert River district, approximately seventy miles (113 km) north of Townsville. Started in the early 1880s to serve the cane plantations and mills, it became an extensive network of lines throughout the area, of which Ingham is the centre, by a co-operative arrangement between the millers and the local Divisional Board. To the whole community it was train, tram, bus and picnic day service. It provided passenger and goods transport to Ingham and beyond from Lucinda, the gateway from the sea, until the 3 ft. 6 ins. (1.06 m) railway was extended from Townsville in December 1919. The tramway passengers had the choice of first or second class carriages and there was the "nigger carriage" of no class at all. Whilst

the advantage of Kanaka labour was seized upon, and considered the only labour suitable among cane in the tropics, segregation was a must. The coming of the North Coast Railway relieved the tramway of much of the passenger and goods transportation, and with progress it became devoted solely to the cane industry, and continues to play an important role. At Innisfail, further north on the coastal strip, a similar narrow gauge tramway came to the rescue of those promoting the sugar industry along the Johnstone and South Johnstone Rivers. Every sugar centre has the indispensable little tramway running about the cane fields, but none have given greater community service than the mighty little fellows at Ingham and Innisfail.

The further south a sugar cane growing community the better chance, it seemed, of a railway being provided through either Government or Divisional Board channels. Mackay got a railway in 1885. It ran out into the sugarcane growing lands along the Pioneer River. It could be conceded that Mackay, being the place where the sugar industry in the north first began, had a claim for a little favouring, and by the time the railway came a number of sugar mills were operating.

The railway builders did not get to Bowen until 1890, and they gave the Bowenites a short railway of very little use, according to early records. It went north for forty-seven miles (76 km), to Wangarratta (later called Bobawaba), stopping just short of sugarcane fields. 'Tis said that the line was built only as an attempt to placate the Bowen people, soured because Townsville has been given the Great Northern inland line. Resentment is still at times expressed at Townsville, with a shipping port that had to be man-made, securing this highly important railway against the claims of Bowen which offered natural protection for shipping in her grand harbour. Political intrigue, and lobbying by influencial businessmen can often move mountains of logic! Bowen had a strong early claim for the inland railway as, after the first discovery of gold at Ravenswood, a roughly-defined road from Bowen had been opened up and used by a few early miners. Little or no interest was being shown from Townsville then. The difference in length of a line to Ravenswood from either Townsville or Bowen was only about thirty miles (48 km) in favour of Townsville, and with much the same terrain to be encountered on either route. Bowen could pull prestige, for what it was worth, as being the first northern township handed over to the Colony following separation from New South Wales. Bowen's first slither of railway eventually became a section of the North Coast line.

Perhaps Bowen was lucky to get this short railway line, which

must have served some purpose, at such a time when the Government was committed heavily to railway construction in north Queensland. The extremely costly Herberton Line, its construction at least one year behind schedule, had not reached Mareeba, and the Great Northern Line from Townsville, following a long hold-up at Charters Towers, was moving on expensively out in the west, having been just taken into Hughenden and then on further to Winton, where men of weight in the pastoral industry had been bellowing for a railway since the hold-up in Charters Towers.

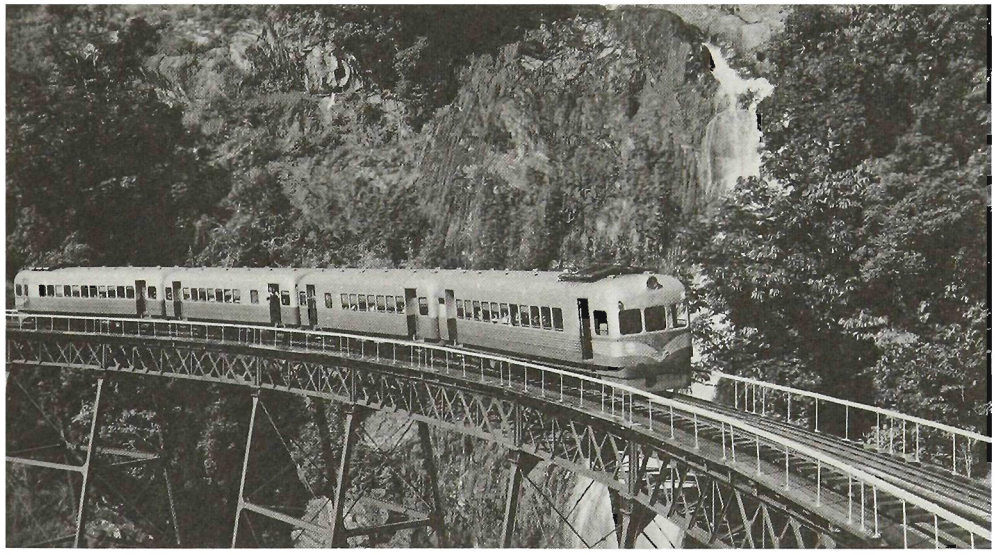
When the parliamentary hot air around the question as to whether the Transcontinental Line was to be, or not to be, had cleared away, and it was not to be (and this was a reason why the line was so slow to move on from Charters Towers), railway construction was resumed at Charters Towers in 1883, and a slow crawl out to the western town of Hughenden, 153 miles (246 km) away, began. It took until February 1884 to lay the rails over the first forty-five miles (72 km) into Homestead. Continuing a dreary crawl, but enlivening small settled communities on the way, by 6 October of the same year a further twenty miles (32 km) had been covered and Pentland was reached. Gold discovered on nearby Cape River in 1863 was still bringing some advantage to Pentland, in addition to its value as a cattle raising centre. Continuing ever westward, the rails were taken over the Warrigal and then across the Burra Range, where the Sandstone Wall, of interest to geologists, kisses the Great Dividing Range, and the railway builders were made welcome at Torrens Creek in October of 1885 – the railway had progress another thirty-three miles (53 km). There is a tale to be told later of a most unusual railway relaying gang that one time worked on the Burra Range, but this was not until 1931.

Torrens Creek was the rail head until nearly the end of 1886 and with a meatworks operating it was already a town of importance. The rails moved forward once more joining Prairie with its neighbour on 6 September 1887 – another twenty-eight miles (45 km) of rails had been thrown down. With Hughenden only twenty-seven miles (43 km) ahead, and with perhaps added labour in the gangs, or maybe urged forward by the knowledge of the almost sighted goal ahead, as a horse sniffing water will summon a final burst of speed, a bit of a hurry-up was put into the job and there was fun with drinks all round at Hughenden on 19 October that same year.

Hughenden was the hub of the thriving north-west pastoral

industry and with the arrival of the railway came calls from the big squatters, at outposts in all directions, for railway extensions from Hughenden, the supply base for transport by horse, bullock and camel teams, and Cobb & Co. An early decision was made to send the rails 133 miles (214 km) south-west to Winton, down in the great Diamentina River country. The rails ran into Winton in 1899.

Due west 245 miles (394 km) from Hughenden awaited Cloncurry, with an abundant field of copper discovered by Ernest Henry when prospecting for gold along the Cloncurry River in 1867. Between Hughenden and Cloncurry men with their large holdings on the fertile downs that rolled unrelieved by tree or mountain to the encircling horizon also waited impatiently for the assistance that the iron horse would bring. But this line had to dwell upon the long drawn-out debates around the excellent proposal of connecting Cloncurry by rail to Normanton. No decision on this was forthcoming until a bill ultimately came before Parliament in 1901 and then, with opposing interests prevailing, was withdrawn. In 1903 a start was made to link Cloncurry to Hughenden. This was completed in 1908 giving the Great Northern Railway the distinction, without honour, of being the last by far of the major inland lines to be extended their full length. The northerners had yet another arrow in the quiver to shoot at those southerners allegedly neglectful of the north.



The glorious falls and Stoney Creek bridge on the Cairns Range, North Queensland. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

Chapter Seven

At length the hardy pioneers
By rock and crag found out the way
And woke with voices of to-day
A silence kept for years and years.

Anon

Investment in railway building, even if it had to be with burdensome interest-bearing borrowed money, continued to be recognized as paramount in ensuring the progress of the Colony. In the southern and central districts the rails kept pushing out through sleeping lands as fast as funds, and the ponderous wheels of government, would allow. The railway lines having reached Warwick from Toowoomba early in January 1871, construction from there to Wallangarra, at the border, was held up for some time. Out across lands that were to provide the State with a wonderful fruit basket, to the apple town of Stanthorpe it was up hill all the way, reaching an altitude of over 3000 feet (914 m). Falling slightly to pass over the Granite Belt, the section of but sixty-four miles (103 km) from Warwick to Wallangarra was not completed until 1887.

Not that Wallangarra has ever had any great attraction enticing railwaymen to hasten to it. The railway was sent to offset the flow of Queensland goods into New South Wales. The southerners had started early to push a railway up to the border, and although Wallangarra remained the sole connecting link for the railway transport of passengers and goods between the two States until 27 September 1930 when the uniform gauge line from South Brisbane was opened, it failed to develop any real character and its only notable activity was the messy business of trans-shipping from one gauge to the other. There is a choice of two hotels. The one on the Queensland side was, in 1940, exhibiting a condemned state resulting from age (no reflection of licensees) but continued dispensing for years. In its favour was the convenience of electric light. On the New South Wales side of the

border, in smug opposition, stood a sturdy building, but bedtime meant lighting a candle – provided. As one railwayman prone to convey his thoughts in verse under the pen name of "Filmac" put it when stationed over dreary years at Wallangarra:

Yes, this is Wallangarra,
If it wasn't for the Mail,
That I roll up every night to see,
Why, I'd rather be in jail.

Before the railway slid into Wallangarra the Legislative Council required a Select Committee to investigate the feasibility of constructing a railway from Warwick direct to St. George – further west than Wallangarra and approximately midway between Roma and the New South Wales border. On 25 November 1886 the Post-Master General (Thomas McDonald Paterson), who lumped railways with other means of communication, presented the report from the Select Committee to the House. He, with a favourable report from Engineer-in-Chief H. C. Stanley to sustain him, did his best to convince members the project was a wise one. He said it was most desirable to offset New South Wales "filching Queensland trade" to run this line to near the border. The idea was to take the line from Warwick via Thanes Creek to St. George, and not necessarily through Goondiwindi. To ignore Goondiwindi, sitting near the border, was the fatal weakness in the plan. The vote in the House resulted thirteen each way. Giving his vote to "no" the Chairman announced the result as against. St. George never did get a railway but eventually a line ran out from Warwick to Goondiwindi, and then further west to Dirranbandi, to confound the filchers south of the border. The rich district of which Warwick is the centre is today served by a network of railway lines.

At the close of that same session of the Legislative Council the first step was taken to give Bowen a railway, and a really worthwhile one. According to official report it was dressed with pomp and ceremony a little out of the ordinary for such matters. On 2 December 1886 the Administrator of the Government, Sir Arthur Hunter Palmer: "sent for the Legislative Assembly to attend on him." The Assembly, led by Premier Griffith (and with him ex-Minister responsible for railways, the redoubtable John Macrossan) promptly attended. Perhaps as a softening measure Sir Arthur "was congratulated on the close of the session". Presented then by the Assembly for Royal assent was a bill to authorize "appropriation towards the cost of the construction of a railway, Bowen to Townsville, via Ayr, two sums – £150,000

[$300,000] and £100,000 [$200,000], Bowen to Haughton Gap and Bowen to Coalfields." The report concludes: "Royal assent was signified in the customary manner." Good intentions don't always bring quick results. A number of years were to pass before much of this money was spent.

In the month before this, on 16 November, a bill for the construction of a railway to Cleveland from Woolloongabba came before the Legislative Assembly, and was passed with practically no debate. The coastal strip down Cleveland way had been settled on very early by farmers who made repeated requests to Parliament for a railway. It was at Cleveland that the first sugarcane was grown – after the initial successful experimental cane growing in the Brisbane Botanical Gardens – and the distilling of rum from the crop.

It was also in this session of Parliament that finality was reached on the controversial matter of taking a railway to Gayndah, the growing township in the Upper Burnett district – a disputed matter since 1881 when some members began plugging in Parliament for the line to run from Miva, on the branch heading into the Lower Burnett area from Theebine, while others sought to join Gayndah by rail with Mount Perry.

On 26 November 1886 a Select Committee report presented to the Legislative Council recommended, much to the chargin of the Mount Perry protagonists, a railway from Mungar, only thirteen miles (21 km) south of Maryborough on the Maryborough-Gympie line, to Gayndah. The report particularly mentioned that such a railway would tap a splendid tract of country with timber of various kinds and "Maryborough was hungry for timber in its timber mills . . . Maryborough with a population of 12,100 (not including coloured) was dependent upon timber mills." It was considered that land suitable for agriculture would be opened up. Enthusing on this, one A. Heron Wilson said that the grass on this land had to be seen to be believed "it grows like lucerne, it is so luxurient".

In firm opposition was J. Taylor who told the House that the proposed railway was known as "the log rolling line – and two bullock drays a month could carry all that was required at Gayndah". He went on to say he was doubtful of the political integrity of some members who spoke in favour of the railway, "it looks considerably like log rolling", he explained, "when you find gentlemen in support who have spoken dead against the Government's railway projects and then are prepared to vote for more lines."

The line at Miva had by then been extended inland a further twenty-two miles (35 km) to Kilkivan and was opening up good timber lands, and this was seized by the Opposition as reason to reject the Gayndah railway proposition, at least for some time. Attention was drawn to the mounting interest charges on loans – £600,000 ($1,200,000) per year in 1883 and £900,000 ($1,800,000) in 1886.

Speaking in favour, J. C. Foote left no doubt as to where he stood on the question of railway building: "We hear a great many things about railways before they are built," he said, "but after, it is proved the more railways constructed the better for the Colony – as soon as we cease constructing railways there are complaints about unemployed people. Construct the railways and improve the value of property. Bad land will always be bad until the railway is constructed into it. Railways bring prosperity and population," he said. The report of the Select Committee was adopted on a vote of fifteen to seven.

Accusations of political log rolling to ensure support for the Gayndah railway, and its continued extension through the Burnett district, were persisted in by some for a long time. They cropped up sharply following an election in 1902, this time directed against the then Premier, R. Philp. George Kerr, Member for Barcoo, attacked the Premier in the House over the arrangements made for the election. He charged Philp with "having to go the night before the election to Maryborough and promise the Gayndah railway". An irate Kerr added the further accusation that to deprive a number of workers of the opportunity to vote against the Government nominees, the election had been held on a Thursday, "the Government was not game to hold it on a Saturday", Kerr said, "Saturday was the most convenient for workers to vote, and vote for Labor, as employers could not allow employees to leave work and vote if they were working many miles from a polling booth – and this applied particularly out West," he complained.

In the same session of Parliament, in 1902, George Ryland (Gympie), exposed some of the atrocious conditions railway builders, as Government employees, were working under. He pointed out that on the Kilkivan extension, for a daily wage of 6s. 6d. (65c), the men in lifting gangs went out to the job at five each morning and finished any time between five and eight in the evening: "and do not make up a full weeks work, although that many hours on the road", he claimed. "Conditions are worse than on lines built by contractors", he said.

It was anything but a happy time for the Government, what with drought in the west and men in the pastoral industry in a bad way, a

vociferous group in Opposition under the banner of the young Labor Party, and the burning of effigies of politicians in Maryborough. Matters proved too tough for Philp. The next year he was out and A. Morgan became Premier on 17 September 1903.

However, the six bob a day navvies kept dragging the two railways into the Burnett River country. The line at Kilkivan had advanced fifty-five miles (88 km), giving access to wonderful stands of timber and fertile areas for cattle grazing and farming, and Kingaroy, then a one-horse centre, but destined to rapidly grow and become world famous with Kingaroy peanuts, welcomed Premier Morgan's stand-in, Mr. A. J. Jones, Member for Nanango, to officially declare the railway open on 19 December 1904. The line eventually managed to amble out another fifteen miles (24 km) to become a terminus at secluded Nanango. Another line of eighteen miles (29 km) shot out from Kingaroy to modest Tarong.

The Gayndah railway continued moving onward through the Upper Burnett and on reaching Monto eighty-nine miles (143 km) from Gayndah became the Gayndah-Monto Line. Gladstone, also with early interests in the area, had a railway run south to Monto. And so it came about that Mount Perry, so much in the debate before the Gayndah line was finally approved, found itself encircled, but unserved, by the railway running in an unbroken sweep from Mungar through Monto to Gladstone. At one point, Eidsvold, the great cattle centre, Mount Perry is as near as fifty miles (80 km) by road. Unfortunate Mount Perry fought battles against becoming just another ghost town. The railway connection to Bundaberg was torn up in the 1950s, leaving only a treacherous seventy mile (113 km) road to serve the needs of the small community remaining.

Out in the south-west the rails eventually reached Charleville in 1888, completing a railway of 483 miles (778 km) direct to Brisbane – a gift to McIlwraith who relieved S. W. Griffith of the premiership as from 13 June 1888. McIlwraith had been raised in status to Sir Thomas by then.

West of Charleville squatters clamoured for the railway to be extended into their territories. Two prongs were constructed out from Charleville, reaching towards the border of South Australia across some of the drowsy grazing lands seized by the very early settlers coming in from New South Wales and Victoria. One prong went west 138 miles (222 km) to rest at Quilpie, on the Bulloo River. The other, going south-west 121 miles (195 km), added life to the mushroomed

township of Cunnamulla, on the Warrego River, with the Paroo a close neighbour.

When the railways arrived the bullockies revenged themselves to some extent for inroad made on their lucrative wagon trade by the new mode of transport with its rushing, steam-snorting locos. With the railway line unfenced it was impossible to prevent cattle straying on to the line. Beasts were sometimes killed, or so maimed they had to be destroyed. The Railway paid compensation. A complaint from the Government that each bullock killed was sworn to as being an expensive poler or leader in a bullock team did not prise any satisfactory explanation out of the bullockies for the strangely recurring coincidence.

If the bullocks got a belting the lot of the railway navvies working out that way was not much better. In 1898, the year the railway entered Cunnamulla, the men working on the construction for long hours each day publicized a complaint that they "had been brought from Brisbane and given jobs at starvation wages". Although Griffith, as Premier, had kept railway building in progress in a number of places throughout the Colony, and the railways were not the little steam tramways he was once accused of favouring, he was one for strict economy, enforced most rigidly in the lowest stratum of society. However, he missed no opportunity to gather plums, as a multi-job holder. Reverting back to that busy sitting of the Legislative Council in 1886, when much railway business was dealt with; during the Council recess, Griffith, recently knighted tossed in the portfolio of Colonial Secretary and took up that of Chief Secretary. He hung on to the other position he was already filling, Vice-President of the Executive Council. And it was in 1886 that payment of parliamentarians began.

A young politician named Dave Bowman endeavoured to help the lot of the navvies on the Cunnamulla line. He was elected to Parliament in a by-election in 1898 as a Labor Party man, and his forthright espousement of the workers' cause as the MLA for the district brought him under bitter attack from a section of the community holding the firm view that those of the labouring mass should be seen (only at work) and not heard. Dave Bowman subscribed to the belief, expressed in Parliament by George Ryland, that governments turned a blind eye to the bad conditions navvies were subjected to as this encouraged railwaymen to look unfavourably on the day labour system. Bowman was subsequently defeated in an election by P. Leahy. The *Queensland Historical Journal* sets out that this "was much to the glee of the

'Charleville Times' which said 'never again would a Labor Member represent Warrego'." However, in or out of Parliament, Dave Bowman, with fighting spirit never dampened, continued for many years marching with the underprivileged.

Whatever the wage offered by the Railways, it was a job and the laying of railway lines continued in each district as the iron horse "pierced the wilderness", to quote one member when waxing eloquent on the virtues of railway building. By Federation the Queensland Government Railways had become a wide-ranging complex industry. Each year saw a swelling of the number of staff employed in all grades; more railway stations erected; additional workshops put into operation; an increasing amount of new and improved equipment; more rolling stock, including locomotives. The last twenty years of the nineteenth century was indeed an amazing period for the many miles of railway constructed, and maintained stretching across long distances with sparse population, in a Colony of vast dimension which depended for home finance on primary industry, an industry subject to an uncertain pattern of flood preceeding drought.

New and various types of locomotives huffed and puffed their journeys along the tracks. During 1882 two C16 "Consolidation", class, supplied by the Baldwin Locomotive Works, were tried out in the Rockhampton district. Pulling a load of 200 tons (203 t), this was a significant advancement in train capacity. Some more of the same class were purchased through a local contractor. At least two served until the late 1920s.

The first "tank" locos to come in were not the stubby coal bunker type to become familiar on the Brisbane suburban runs. In 1884 five 8D 15 Tank class were purchased. Nicknamed "Donald Dinnies", after a strong man of that period, they were the most powerful then in use. Confined to goods traffic their last runs were in the early 1920s.

The B15 class began arriving in 1889 and a total of ninety-eight were introduced. Having small driving wheels, they were hitched only to goods trains until 1903 when a programme was begun to convert them to driving wheels of forty-five inches (114 cm) diameter, for mixed traffic. To the locomotive fraternity they were always known as "Converted B15". A few continued kicking up their heels in shunting yards almost long enough to witness dieselization.

The B13's came in 1892. Originally "F" class, no less than 112 were ultimately on the road, most of them built by the English firms of

Dubs & Co., and Kitson and Co. A longer wheels base was given to some of the last built. About 1900 all were subjected to some re-building and received boilers carrying higher steam pressure. Distributed throughout the State, some trundled along into the 1930s. A few ended careers in sugar farms or on other private tramways.

The grandest of the small locomotives, and highly acceptable to enginemen, were the PB15 class. From 1899 to 1913 the number in service rose to 202, indicating the popularity of these hard-working, sprightly-running, and compact units of power. In 1925–26 an additional thirty had their performance enhanced by being fitted with outside Walschaert valve gear, replacing the less accessible Stephenson link motion within the engine frame under the boiler. All fine steamers, needing a minimum of attention and most reliable, they were versatile enough to make valuable contributions in the job of opening up new outposts, running on the lightest of rails, and for some time until sufficient of the larger boys came along, pulled fast passenger trains, such as those from Cairns to Townsville and further south, and Charleville to Cunnamulla and Quilpie. One was taken by the Aramac Shire Council for their tramway. A most attractive loco with glossy battle-ship grey boiler, encircled with broad brass bands, a warm affinity developed between them and the men who rode their foot-plates. Some refused to retire from shunting yards, where they spent their last years, until they fled the fumes of diesel oil into the arms of unsentimental scrap men.

It was in 1901 that the 6D16 Tank came in. They carried the Brisbane suburban traffic for years. With noticeably large boilers, twenty were introduced in 1901–2. Some of the late arrivals had the original trailing bogie of two wheels replaced by one of four wheels. These were built by Walkers Ltd., Maryborough.

By that time Maryborough was reaping the benefit of the rail connection with Brisbane. The line had been taken on from Bald Hills to Gympie (106 miles [171 km] from Brisbane) linking up early settlements as it spanned fertile flats and ridges. It pushed through scrublands of valuable timbers, where thudding axes and crying saws disturbed the sylvan solitude, crossed the Pine, Mooloolah and Maroochy Rivers – whose waters murmured gently to the rattle of Cobb & Co. coaches before the railway came – tracked through the Caloundra and picturesque Maroochy districts, backdrop to the Sunshine Coast. (This area now flourishes with cane and fruit growing

since the rich timbers have been cut out.) Then embracing the Blackall Range, where many legends of the Aborigines remain forever hidden, the railway builders pushed on over the final section, slowly climbing to receive a miners' welcome in 1891 at the golden town of Gympie, perched among enfolding tall ridges.

Also in 1891 a start had been made to connect up the bits and pieces of isolated lines along the eastern coast. Bundaberg was joined by steel to Maryborough that year. In 1897 the first trains were bustling between Bundaberg and Gladstone, with its grandly protected harbour, and once in the running to be the capital city of the Colony, and less honoured as a place where, in 1845, a feeble attempt was made to bung in convicts. It was not until 1903 though that the through rail service from Brisbane to Rockhampton was completed.

Although Gladstone has now become an important bulk loading port for two large coal export projects, has a large alumina plant in production, a $200 million power station coming, and a coal-loading berth taking ships of 100,000 tons (101,600 t), it was not until very recently that the outstanding attributes of this centre received the favour it deserved from those who govern. In 1900 the Gladstonians succeeded in having the Callide Railway Bill brought before the House. It was to provide a branch line inland to the Callide coalfield. The Bill was thrown out. There was renewed agitation in 1902 and the Bill was resubmitted. This time it got through. The railway was completed by a private company of Rockhampton men led by a Mr. Spier. The company was granted ten acres (4 ha) of land on Barney Point for wharfage. The railway was of seventy-five miles (110 km).

It was in 1902 that the railway, taken on from Beenleigh, had reached Nerang and was approaching Coolangatta (twin town to Tweed Heads on the State border) at the southern end of the Gold Coast. This line, much to the disgust of many, was abandoned in the 1950s.

Construction of the central inland railway had, in the meantime, continued slowly westward, with little advance after reaching Bogantungan in 1883 (just after passing through Emerald) until the branch line from Emerald to Clermont was completed in 1884.

It was strange, under the then-existing circumstances, that this line to Clermont should have been built when the mining boom there had become but a memory. It was copper more than gold that gave early prominence to the Clermont area. High grade copper ore was found a

few miles south-west of Clermont in 1861, thus giving birth to the township of Copperfield. The Peak Downs Copper Mines, Unlimited, took over and both towns had a mining boom. The gold was no bonanza and by 1877 the copper load was providing only low grade ore. Desultory mining by small syndicates continued until 1881. Copperfield was soon deserted. Remaining still though is a small store catering for cattle properties. However, the Clermont railway, if only sixty-three miles (100 km) in length, did bring a little assistance to the pastoralists and was taken a further eleven miles (18 km) for the coal mining at Blair Athol.

Copperfield is no longer shown on maps but who can say whether it, Clermont and Blair Athol may not be picked up in the coal extraction projects now operating in the Peak Downs and neighbouring areas which are producing fantastic tonnages of the "black gold" (expected to reach over twenty million tonnes a year) from the earth's bosom and sending the coal forward to the brand-new coal-loading port at Hay Point twelve miles (14 km) south of Mackay, on the first railway lines built for forty years. The trains on this line will haul 10,160 tonnes, powered by six diesel locomotives – but worked by only one train crew of driver, fireman and guard – with each gigantic, snake-like train 2 km in length. The three historic towns are only what the humourist would call the estate agents "stone throw" away from new townships set up by the coal barons, such as Goonyella, Moranbah, Coppabella. The question in many people's minds is whilst harvesting Queensland's wealth why not infuse new life into some of Queensland's good old little townships that sit upon the coal basis bounty, and for which the operating companies pay the State a royalty of just 5c. a tonne – to the year 2010. (Negotiations between the Queensland State Government and companies concerned to improve the royalty took place in 1974.)

As to Blair Athol coal, it is reputed to be the best power-steaming coal in the world, and locomotive enginemen who had the good fortune to work with this clean, almost ash-free and fiercely burning coal, would be in full agreement. Old hands in Townsville will recall struggling with a loco reluctant on the cheap, often nasty, coal provided on the tender (low grade from Collinsville colliery) and then the joyful discovery of Blair Athol coal buried at the back of the tender – residue of a tender full when the loco had been running in the central division. Then there was the clamber up and along the tender coal heap to dig out and throw forward the "find" which resulted in a miraculous im-

provement in the loco's performance with every shovelful thrown into the firebox. It must also be admitted that when a loco, by a bit of luck, happened to be shunted into a siding where a wagon of Blair Athol coal was found standing close by on the neighbouring siding, the enginemen had no compunction in transferring some of the appealing black lumps to the loco tender. That private enterprise was short shipped a few hundred weight was of little moment.

But this was a far cry from the early days of Blair Athol, when the "pony railway" was edging westward from Buguntungun. The days when no soothsayer, gifted with the wildest imagination, foretold that trains of 10,160 tonnes would eventually be winding across the land. From Boguntungun up to the highest plateau on the Central Highlands the railway wended its way, opening up places with old-world names such as Alpha, Beta, and then Jericho – with Lake Galilee over to the north. Hard to believe that the Alpha-Jericho district, roughly 300 miles (482 km) inland from Rockhampton, towards the sunset, has experienced snow, at an altitude of 1150 feet (351 m). From Jericho the advancing railway undulated down to Barcaldine for the monotonous tracking across the gentle swells of the downlands, with the heat engendered mirage displaying the illusive distant picture of grazing animals and trees floating on sheets of shimmering water. Then Longreach, sweltering in summer and freezing in winter, 427 miles (687 km) from Rockhampton, where the long wait was forgiven in the gladness of seeing the steel lines of communication arrive in 1892.

The central inland trunk line, unlike its contemporaries in the south and north, was not left dangling at a dead end. Longreach was joined by rail to Winton and many have been the times when the State was glad of this connection during floods when railway washouts have disrupted the railway service along the coast between Rockhampton and Townsville for days, and sometimes even weeks. During these trying periods the emergency has been overcome by diverting rail traffic from Rockhampton out to Longreach, through Winton to Hughenden and then on to Townsville. This alternative route north was a boon during World War II.

With the railway at Longreach there came pressure for further railway building to grazing centres in the central-west. On 10 July 1897, the *Queenslander* reported that a deputation comprising politicians and representatives of the Rockhampton Chamber of Commerce waited upon the Minister for Railways (Mr. J. R. Dickson) seeking a branch railway from Ilfracombe, seventeen miles (27 km) east

of Longreach, to run south-west following the Thompson River (on the bank of which Longreach sits) for about 100 miles (160 km) to Stonehenge, then to cross the river and to continue into the grazing area beyond, as far as the Government could be persuaded to take it. An alternate suggestion was that the railway cross the Thompson at Jundah, fifty miles (80 km) on from Stonehenge. The deputation said this line from Ilfracombe was desired instead of one going that way from Longreach. It would seem there was a pull between rival interests here as the line from Longreach would cover no greater distance, and may have been cheaper to build. The deputation stressed the point that "although the people at Stonehenge and Jundah had a rebate on goods carriage at the time they wanted the railway, as the benefit it would bring to stations was inestimable." Of course the Minister promised "to have the matter considered". Neither Ilfracombe nor Longreach got the railway, after the matter had been "considered". Instead a branch line was taken out from biblical Jericho. It runs south-west down to the pastoralists at Blackall, seventy-two miles (116 km) from Jericho, then a further ninety-seven miles (156 km) into the sheep country and ends abruptly at the small township of Yaraka just short of the Barcoo River, with disappointed Stonehenge and Jundah 100 miles (160 km) or so further west. And the railway builders never went again into the remote central-west, where squatters rode high on their domains among their flocks with golden fleece, all too often arrogant in their affluence and influence.

The deputation to Minister Dickson put up two other railway propositions, as reported in the same issue of the *Queenslander*. One was for a line from Barcaldine north-west for 100 miles (160 km) or so to Muttaburra (directly north of Longreach), via Aramac, a growing centre forty-two miles (68 km) out from Barcaldine. The Minister was told that such a railway "would traverse some of the best country in Australia". But nothing came out of the proposition. Later the Aramac Shire Council put down a private tramway to Barcaldine. The other suggestion from the deputation sought the carrying out of alternate surveys for a railway to Yeppoon, a little to the north of Emu Park, on Rockhampton's near coast, the railway to be a branch from the line of thirty-three miles (53 km), opened in 1888, connecting Emu Park with Rockhampton. Alternate surveys were to settle argument as to where the branch would start and then go into what was classed as splendid sugarcane country. The deputation had better luck this time and the branch line was constructed fourteen miles (23 km) out from

Rockhampton. As something to argue about it did not rate high, being only twenty miles (32 km) in length.

Rockhampton had to wait many years for a railway to Mount Morgan only twenty-five miles (40 km) away. It was here that the first reef mining in the Colony took place, and both gold and copper had been discovered in 1882. Worked initially by a syndicate formed by the Morgan brothers who found it, by 1886 it was being operated by the Mount Morgan Mining Company and paying nice dividends – in 1889 it paid 110 per cent. The difficulty in getting a railway to the mining centre was its position, necessitating a steep climb, and it was not until 1898 that the railway was built. A section of "rack" line to negotiate the climb was laid. This required a special kind of locomotive and the B13½ Abt loco was the result. It travelled up the 1 in 16 grade by means of a pinion wheel engaging with the teeth of the rack set in the track. The loco worked on four steam cylinders. By 1915 six were in service. The rack railway was eliminated when a deviation of the line was constructed, to facilitate train running beyond Mount Morgan on the Dawson, Callide Valley, and Callide coalfields branches.

But before the Mount Morgan line was built, and before the rails had stretched as far as Longreach, central Queensland had become the setting for an upheaval in the pastoral industry, jolting the old order of things with an impact of lasting effect politically and socially, throughout the Colony. The historical shearers' strike of 1891 tore at the basis of employers' concept of law and order. By circumstance, and sympathy, railwaymen were drawn into the maelstrom of revolt, hatred and bitterness as feelings intensified and stikers were viciously hounded. And railwaymen at the time had their own particular troubles with the first stirrings in the Service for the formation of the "new unionism" – one union in industry.

The final far-flung frontier to be roused by the railway was the Cloncurry district, ranging over some 200 square miles (51,799 ha) of land loaded with mineral wealth. The rails were taken 245 miles (394 km) over the treeless, sun bleached downs rolling westward from Hughenden. Pushing aside the obsolete old Cobb & Co. and camel team services, the long-awaited metal track was given a gala welcome in 1908. Immediately the work of connecting Cloncurry with copper mining areas in the district, and at the same time providing rail centres for pastoralists, began.

A line was run sixty-eight miles (109 km) south-west from

Cloncurry to the copper at Duchess and was later continued a further thirty-four miles (55 km) to the cattle centres of Butru and Dajarra, on the the fringe of the Barclay Tableland, with the Georgina River country just ahead. Off this line, thirty-two miles (51 km) out from Cloncurry, a branch line was taken south for forty miles (64 km) to Selwyn, hiding in the Selwyn Range, abundant with copper as well as cobult and other minerals. Eighteen miles (28 km) before Selwyn was the neighbourley and prospering township of Kuridala. Both Selwyn and Kuridala, with their mines and smelters, had years of rough glory, but in the early 1920s rapidly became ghosted and the railway was torn up. It was from Duchess, in 1925, that the industrial giant Mount Isa received its branch line — fifty-four miles (87 km) from Duchess and one hundred and twenty-two (196 km) from Cloncurry.

From Cloncurry a railway of seventy-nine miles (127 km) ran northwards through centres providing outlets for Gulf country cattle, two main centres being Quamby and Kajabbi. This line terminated at Dobbyn, but a spur was shot out six miles (10 km) from this one-hotel country town to Mount Cuthbert with its mine and copper smelter perched high on the mountain. The gap of no great distance between Dobbyn and the old mining town of Croydon, further to the north, could easily have been bridged by rails to give the once talked of Normanton-Cloncurry railway to the well deserving lands on to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Dobbyn was the loading station for Mount Oxide copper ore being won from several small scattered mines. Economics put an end to activities on the field in the 1930s and the last twenty miles (32 km) of the railway line were scrapped, leaving the terminus at Kajabbi, where it remains with its future always insecure.

The Mount Oxide area, with some mines still in production, was prominently in the news in 1931 when a strike by the small group of miners, endeavouring to secure a wage commensurate with the cost of living in the isolated region, led to the scandalous disowning of these members, in serious trouble, by their influential union, as well as this union's unscrupulous abandonment of railway unions and their members after railwaymen, endeavouring to render the miners assistance in accordance with a cardinal rule of trade unionism, were driven into conflict with the State Government. But railway men had passed through a series of turbulent periods before then.

Left to brood in undisturbed solitude for many years, in 1969 quite a lot began to appear in newspapers of how Mount Oxide was to

be bestirred once more; the copper field was to be developed extensively by two or more companies, a new town, Gunpowder, was in the course of construction out in the wilderness close to Mount Oxide itself and would be provided with costly mod cons for pleasant living. The town was to cost $2.5m. Sale of copper concentrates from the treatment plant to Japan was expected to gross, or even exceed, a total of $200m. in value. But, in October of 1971, the press was reporting that the grandoise plans were falling apart with the chief company concerned in bad trouble and it, with an attached company (said to be operating at Gunpowder) in the hands of the liquidator. However, the project seems to have stumbled along some way or another in a very quiet manner with little information of its progress appearing in the press. On 16 November 1973 the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* reported: "Members of craft-unions and the Federated Engine Driver's and Firemen's Association have stopped work for 48 hours at Gunpowder while talks continue on an overall agreement for workers at the township," – shades of 1931 wage trouble.

The old railway crossing gates, when only an occasional train disturbed the tranquility of a pretty setting. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

Chapter Eight

Let us Work
For the cause that needs assistance,
For the wrongs that need resistance,
For the future in the distance
And the good that we may do

taken from the *Rule Book of the Queensland Railway Employees' Association*

Until the 'eighties there were only isolated instances of railwaymen being drawn into some semblance of unionism — in a very restricted form at the Ipswich Workshops, and in a few other centres small numbers of employees banded together, with some timidity, in local loosely-formed sectional groups with interest extending no further than the narrow confines of the particular job they were engaged on at the time. Little alteration of the execrable conditions of employment resulted, and the long working day (generally of ten hours) persisted.

In the south there had been an upsurge of industrial unionism. Pastoral workers, organized in the Amalgamated Shearers' Union (later the Australian Workers' Union), to which the Queensland Shearers' Union was attached, were pressing claims on the squattocracy which resulted in higher wages and improved conditions. Radical articles by William Lane, socialist and brilliant journalist, were appearing in the Brisbane press. William Lane was to create the first Labor paper in Australia, the *Queensland Worker,* and was instrumental in the formation of the Australian Labor Federation, as the central trade union uniting body.

Thus influenced, a group of Queensland railwaymen, drawn together by Gilbert Casey, met under a tree at Bundamba, near Ipswich, in 1886, and launched an all-grade union. They named it the Queensland Railway Employees' Association. The little acorn sown by Gilbert Casey and his mates grew and flourished. The new union quickly attracted members in southern Queensland, and Queensland rail-

waymen were thus distinguishing themselves as being among those who pioneered the "new unionism", embracing all workers in the one industry, to supplant the isolationist, narrow, craft unions and associations. The QREA lived on, although at one stage – weakened by vicious opposition from railway administrators, and the victimization of its leaders and prominent members – it hung to life by only a thread. But, to the honour of that group of visionaries who, selflessly in 1886, sought to provide something through which railwaymen could gain a happier and more humane place in society, what they created proved durable and eventually became the Queensland Railways Union, with members in every corner of the State. It later became a State branch of the Australian Railways Union, of over 60,000 strong at the beginning of World War II.

It was once written that "it is the working class who are making history". Willy-nilly, when not directly engaged in "making history", by virtue of being employed in a public utility, railwaymen, through their union movement, have constantly been either among or standing by the "makers of history", both political and social. And there is the particular position of unionism in an industry where the Government is boss. In recording some of the history of the early struggles of all-grade railway unionism in Queensland the *Railway Advocate,* organ of the Queensland Branch of the Australian Railways Union, explained: "A comprehensive history of railway unionism would encompass much that could be regarded as belonging rightly to the history of the State." It also stated:

> being a State-owned industry, politically controlled, current political thought is largely reflected in the administration of the railway service; and so railway unionism's history is one denoting the open antagonism to it, the tolerance of it, or the encouragement given it by the political controllers of the State at the particular time . . . no open encouragement was given it until 1915.

Until 1889 the young all-grade union continued to thrive with some small but important improvements for railwaymen being secured. On 1 October 1889 the first edition of the *Queensland Railway Times* was distributed. The paper was under the management of a committee of QREA members, with George College, station master at Toowong, as editor. During this period the Railways were under the control of Commissioner F. Curnow, having continued in the job after taking over from A. O. Herbert in 1885. (Herbert had remained as Commissioner

for Railways for twenty-one years after cleaning up the mess left by scalawag Abram Fitzgibbon, sacked in 1864.)

With two ministers for railways in and out again between 1887 and 1889 (C. B. Dutton and Sir Hugh Nelson), and they with little time to even find out what the portfolio was all about, let alone pay any attention to the new element of unionism intruding into the Service, things progressed reasonably well for the busy, and courageous, union builders. Then, with the coming of 1890, something akin to the wrath of hell descended.

At the end of 1889, Commissioner Curnow had gone and the administration of the railways had become the responsibility of a Board, comprising three Commissioners – J. Mathieson, A. Johnston, and R. J. Gray, with Mathieson as Chief Commissioner; he and Johnston had been recruited from overseas.

Chief Commissioner John Mathieson had hardly warmed the seat of authority when he made it clear he was unfriendly to the workers. By word and action he left no doubt of his hatred of unionism and those who espoused it. As a security measure it was agreed that at least one union leader should be placed beyond the reach of what unionists considered were the Commissioner's harassing and victimizing methods. Jim Wilkinson resigned from the Railway Service to fill the union secretaryship, his salary to be paid by the all-grade union. And the Service thereby lost a most competent employee.

The struggle to maintain the right to be a unionist became intense, with the jobs of those in any way prominent constantly at stake. The least to be feared was a transfer to some outlandish place. Nevertheless, the new union continued to attract support from men in the different sections of the service. Unfortunately, the remaining record of those who continued to carry the fight for unionism, despite the always imminent victimization, is scanty. Only a few names seem to have drifted down the avenue of time – G. College, Mick Woods, Ernie Sampson, G. Forde, Tom Hale, Jim Sheppard, Sam Mayes, J. Hardy; all at one time or another filled union positions of the most prominent order, and were very vulnerable to attack because of their important standing as railway employees, some were station masters and at least one a rising Traffic Inspector.

The transfer weapon was something of a two-edged sword. Shifting a "trouble maker" from Brisbane, the hub of the union movement, or from central Queensland where it was fast spreading, to the then very remote north where most bad boys were flung, meant that

the message of unionism, and all it stood for, was carried to new fields by some of its most devoted ambassadors. That north Queensland in later years was referred to as "the militant North" was the result no doubt, in some measure, of the early sowing of the seeds for militant unionism.

The uneasy last decade of the century opened with the shearers' strike in full flame in central Queensland, its effects spreading into the ranks of railwaymen, among whom there was much sympathy for the shearers. But, by then, Commissioner Mathieson had played his devastating "joker". From the Commissioner's officer had come the order that "any officer in charge of men must choose between his membership in the union and his position in the service." As members were not sufficiently unionized to offer defiance to this, the effect on the QREA was tragic.

Understandably, fear brought a stream of resignations from the union. As leading positions in the union were filled by, in the main, employees holding some office of authority in the Service, and already marked by Mathieson, their choice was "Buckley's" – and there was a mounting army of unemployed. The chief officers of the union in Brisbane attempted to carry on the functions of the union, but overt victimization and unwelcome transfers sapped all but a weak underground stream of life from the movement. The *Queensland Railway Times* was saddled with a heavy debt, and Jimmy Wilkinson carried on without salary as secretary. He kept the paper going for some years, securing a living as best he could. His clear and hardhitting writings contributed, in no small measure, to helping keep alive the principle of all-grade unionism until brighter days arrived.

It was in such a state of union disarray that railwaymen became involved in the shearer's strike of 1891; a strike to preserve unionism in shearing sheds; for the right to organize opposition to deterioration in rates of pay and working conditions. Fundamental issues for workers everywhere, and no section of workers was more interested in the outcome of the shearers' fight than railwaymen.

Refusing to recognize the edict from the pastoralists headquarters that shearing sheds would work to "agreements" – meaning no recognition of the shearers' union and the wages and conditions operating until then – most of the 11,000 who were members of the Queensland Shearers' Union sat tight in their camps at Barcaldine and Clermont, where they regularly gathered before the commencement of the wool season each year. From these camps they sent back their reply

that they would shear "union" or not at all. They emphasized their solidarity by flying the blue and white Eureka flag over their camps. The sequence of events that followed is known to many, some wish it could be forgotten, of how Premier Griffith threw the full weight of his Government on the side of the pastoralists including Victorian capitalists such as George Fairbairn and others with vast areas of sheeplands on to which they made their way in the early days and grasped, without so much as by your leave, or held for little more than a song, alongside equally huge pastures in the hands of banks and leased. Escorted by armed police some "scab" shearers and learners arrived at sheds. Then, as shearers remained firmly determined to withhold their labour, Barcaldine and Clermont were overrun with armed police, militia and detachments of the colonial regular troops, and their distribution far and wide protected sheds with armed free labourers, hunting and harassing picketing and demonstrating shearers. The term "shearer shooter" was born and few were the free labourers, or poor dupes sworn in as special armed police, ever allowed to shed this mark of Cain, and remembered longest by both shearers and railwaymen.

Large gangs of men were then working on the railway construction going through Barcaldine and on to Longreach (with working conditions so bad that the Government had been petitioned seeking ameliorative measures). Working with the proceeding railway construction were gangs of railway telegraph employees. Among them, and the regular staff at stations along the line, were many drawn to the shearer's cause, with sympathy and anger rising as the display of arms against the shearers increased. They were soon to pay dearly for their sympathy, and principles. Commissioner Mathieson, in his element, sacked and fined right and left. In Parliamentary Debates (1891) there is evidence enough.

Rising in the Legislative Assembly to speak on the matter of "Railwaymen on the Central Line, and railway telegraph employees sacked for supporting unionism" Mr. Andrew Henry Barlow (Ipswich) prefaced his main remarks with an assurance to the House that "he was not one to advocate Communism, Socialism, anarchy or insubordination", he then added "but the men are entitled to a better deal." He told the House that it appeared a large number of dismissals had taken place and "it looks like a special commission has been set up in the Central Division to deal with these employees, and they were being dealt with summarily and denied the right to reply in their

defence." He related instances of this.

Four men (Barlow said he had their names) were sacked for being connected with the Queensland Railway Employees Association, and for pledging a days pay in each month in support of the strike.

A clerk was sacked for saying "it serves him right if he broke his neck". This could have been related to misfortune that befell two policemen (also recounted in the House). The two were riding on a train and in jumping off stumbled and fell, evidently to the joy of onlookers. One railwayman who laughed lost his job. The fireman on the train was sacked, evidently considered in some way to blame. Others were fined for adding in one way or another to the discomfurture of the fallen coppers.

One of the dismissed men took up work with his father-in-law, a coal contractor, but was hounded out of the railway yard when on this job.

Another who had been in the Railway Service since 1877, together with an "accomplice", earned the sack for allegedly "carrying letters" – strikers were often warned of troop movements by the passing on of notes.

A porter when on passive duty took the opportunity to attend a meeting of railway employees – he was sacked.

In an endeavour to put some restraint upon petty tyranny, Mr. Barlow moved that all information regarding such cases be placed before the House. Leading the opposition to this the Secretary for Railways, the Honourable T. Unmack, spoke of men aiding and abetting law breakers, and defeating the great effort being made by the Government in the interests of the country. "The loyalty of railwaymen was wanted", he said. The information leading to the men being dealt with was obtained "from all sources, and corners and it would be unwise, on State policy, to supply this to the public or lay it on the table of the House", the Secretary said. It had become well known that pimps were being specially selected and dispersed among the men.

The motion before the House was defeated on the vote of seven to thirty-two. The six supporting "a better deal" for the harassed men were in addition to Barlow – T. Glasey, Sambert, J. Macfarlane, J. O'Sullivan, J. G. Drake and Solkela.

And the wretched pattern of things prevailed for six months, with shearers kept on the run and numbers hauled before magistrates who were scattered throughout the wool areas, and sentenced to short and long terms of imprisonment, usually on charges of picketing and

demonstrating against free labourers. Railwaymen continued to fall victims to dismissals and fines. In Rockhampton the known count of sackings was thirty-three. Their only consolation was that they escaped imprisonment. Collecting money for the strike fund brought imprisonment for shearers. One case recorded is that of a group of shearers camped outside Charleville who were arrested and gaoled for soliciting donations from the townspeople. Gaol for some at Augathella, in the same area, meant being chained to a log in the sun. A railway guard, under a cloud of suspicion which hung over active unionists, was forbidden, by letter, to carry with him when working a train the customary guards' box (for holding blankets, pillow and food). He learnt he was suspected of carrying guns and ammunition for the strikers.

When the shearers' stand was over, their organization shattered and twelve of their leaders sentenced to three years gaol on charges of conspiracy – brought under an old United Kingdom statute that had been repealed in England – approaches began in an endeavour to have dismissed railwaymen reinstated, with very limited success, as "it was a troublesome time, very troublesome", said Minister Unmack. Eventually, four were reinstated with a promise that three or four of the Rockhampton victims would be re-employed "as vacancies occurred".

Hopes were raised when the Australian Labor Party emerged out of the embittered trade union movement in the eastern colonies still suffering from the severe set-backs inflicted by the united attacks of the employers in 1890–91 and during the several years before. In 1893 sixteen were elected to the Queensland Parliament under the banner of Labor. Among the sixteen were: Andy Dawson, Matt Reid, George Kerr, H. F. Hardacre, Bill Brown, J. Wilkinson and Andrew Fisher, Gympie miner and future Labor Prime Minister. The new Labor Party was expected to add parliamentary action to the struggle of the organized workers for working-class advancement and, the serious socialists believed, by class political activity hurry forward worker emancipation. That comforting illusion continuing to delude with false hope, whilst discounting the Marxian theory that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes".

At this time harmony in the Railway Commissioners' Board Room had become badly strained and in 1896 a joint committee enquired into the

cause. Following the committee's report Johnston was in retirement and union smasher Mathieson solved a problem by taking himself off to Victoria. The remaining member of the Board, R. J. Gray, survived to carry on as sole Commissioner for Railways. Thus ended the one and only attempt to administer the Service by a Board dividing responsibilities.

The year Mathieson departed (perhaps encouraged by it) a special meeting called in Brisbane for the purpose of re-marshalling the forces of the Queensland Railway Employees' Association was most successful and the Brisbane branch, and one at Ipswich, were soon functioning well. Slowly branches arose in other centres, some to rise and later fall away either from lost interest or harassment of members by petty departmental despots. It was not until some years following the turn of the century that open hostility to the all-grade union relaxed.

The QREA rode out the unsympathetic years with changing premiers and ministeries – Sir Tom McIlwraith replacing Sir Sam Griffith in 1893 but he only stayed for seven months. Then H. M. Nelson 1893–98, followed by Tommy J. Byrnes, the brilliant product of Queensland's early education system and her first native-born premier – but for only six months in 1898. J. R. Dickson 1898 to 1899 gave way to Andy Dawson with the first Labor Ministry that held office for six days in December 1899 until R. Philp and his pals took over. then, after Federation, A. Morgan took office on 17 August 1903.

A degree of union campaigning continued around various matters of concern throughout the Service – in the forefront were the establishment of an Appeal Board as a measure of protection against unwarranted fines and dismissals and other freely dispensed punishments, the introduction of the eight-hours working day, and fortnightly pays instead of monthly (with four days pay held by the Department) – all long overdue. All too often, should an outwardly sympathetic hearing be given union representations the barrier of "no money" was raised, with a homily on the need for tight economy within the Service.

One who widely advertised his stern resolve to effect overall economy throughout the Railways was Minister for Railways, J. Leahy, who took up the portfolio in 1901. The next year he issued the firm dictum: "The railways must pay." In the House A. H. Barlow challenged such a blunt order, and expressed the opinion that: "The railways must be made to pay as far as is consistant with an increase of traffic, and the best revenue that can be got consistantly with the opening up of the country." A contention never given the consideration

it deserved.

Economy measures in industry invariably apply first to the lowest-paid workers, and Leahy cast a devastating eye over the ever increasing staff of fettlers required to maintain the wide-spreading permanent way. He introduced a plan for the formation of flying gangs "with a view to further reducing, and displacing men; on some lengths men entirely". John Leahy was not around long enough to see how this idea really worked as he handed over the railway portfolio to Sir Arthur Morgan in 1903. But the pattern of skimping on maintenance staff continued to run through the history of the Queensland Railways, with the condition of the track in places sometimes bearing witness to the foolhardiness of such tight economy. In 1925 this policy set the flame that flared into a serious strike situation throughout the whole Railway Service.

As the early years of the new century came gliding in opening up of the country continued. Whilst railwaymen smarted under grievances unredressed, they continued building out in wildernesses, taking existing tracks a little further or constructing branches, and their mates followed with trains and railway services. The cost of railway construction was certainly a budget matter of never-ending concern to the Government, with interest to overseas bond holders mounting. The *Annual Review of Queensland – to June, 1902* – shows that to 1902 Queensland had expended £20,984,362 ($41,968,724) on railways. Of this sum £865,219 ($1,703,438) had been spent on lines yet to be opened, and a total of 2801 miles (4507 km) of railway were available for traffic. At the time this gave Queensland a mileage per head of population higher than any other state, or New Zealand (excepting West Australia), and this was a mileage far in excess of any country in the world.

The same source of information sets out the following comparison: New South Wales had expended £40,565,073 ($81,130,146) on the construction of 3026 miles (4869 km) of 4 ft. 8½ ins. (1.43 m) of railway against Queensland's £20,119,143 ($40,398,286) for 2801 miles (4507 km) – and working expenses were comparatively lower for Queensland. As to relative speeds with mail trains: on the Sydney to Brisbane run New South Wales' trains ran the 490 miles (788 km) from Sydney to Wallangarra at an average speed of about twenty-eight miles per hour (45 km). The Queensland trains covered the 223 miles (359 km) from Wallangarra to Brisbane at an average speed of twenty-three and three-tenths miles (37 km) – in each

case no allowance was made for stoppages.

The inevitable growth of unionism in the Railway Service was providing railwaymen with some feeling of unity and bargaining power. Extensions of the Queensland Railway Employees' Association had formed in the central and northern divisions, although they were functioning really as separate bodies – each being cut off from the other because of the breaks in the railway running north from Brisbane.

The mounting influence, politically and industrially, of the union movement in the Service was reflected in the proposal put forward by Premier Philp early in 1903. With political cunning he sought to isolate *en bloc* the railway vote by giving railwaymen direct representation in State Parliament. This would cut deep into the vote relied on by Labor Party candidates. Philp's suggestion was also intended to weaken railwaymen's resentment to the "anti-politics Rule" – Rule 18 in the Staff Regulations of the Queensland Railways set out: "Employees in the Railway Service will be afforded every reasonable facility for recording their votes at Parliamentary elections, but they are hereby forbidden, under pain of dismissal, from taking any active or prominent part in political matters, or from canvassing for any Parliamentary candidate." Union leaders explained the full implications of Philp's proposal to meetings of railwaymen, and although direct representation would have been an advantage, in the immediate sense, the general political enlightenment of the men was such that they would have none of it, and as a result of strong protest it was abandoned.

Persistent agitation was rewarded when, in November 1905, the Railway Employees' Appeal Bill was passed. The event was celebrated with a smoke concert arranged under the auspices of the Grand Council of Railway Unions. The Grand Council (forerunner of the present Combined Railway Unions' Committee) was born of the unfortunate fragmentation of unionism into an increasing number of small sectional outfits, as opposed to all-grade unionism. The QREA fostered the Grand Council in an attempt to secure some unity in matters of common interest.

Railwaymen were soon to find that, when set up, the Appeal Board, where they had hoped to find a fair measure of justice, had been loaded against them by the appointment to it of a preponderance of Departmental officers. In the course of time the scales of justice became more evenly balanced.

The sectional unions, as distinct from the traditional craft unions,

remained to multiply like a molluscous growth around a rock. With narrow policies, geared to give little disturbance to the old establishment, the Queensland Railway Service became, and remained, unique in their multiplicity (some with membership so tiny that to term them "self admiration societies" puts strain on a compliment). Over them the all-grade union has continually stumbled on the way forward and upward, whilst forever striving for some order out of such union chaos through Grand Councils, and such like bodies.

Still, the railwaymens' lot was slowly being bettered. By 1907 several major advancements had been secured. The most important was contained in the Order in Council providing a working day of eight hours for all government employees earning daily wages. It was not an eight-hours day in the full sense of the term for railwaymen; the new regulation set out that; "The recognised working day shall be eight hours or, if the exigencies of the Service require irregular or longer hours, ninety-six hours per fortnight." Overtime payment commenced when ninety-six hours had been reached and was paid at the rate of time and a-quarter. Sunday work attracted payment at time and a-half. The eight-hours day, on a more favourable basis, had been operating for some time in workshops and among the maintenance and construction men. However, the move from a working day of ten hours benefited a large number of employees and pay days were fortnightly.

It certainly called for a celebration, which took the form of a dinner at a leading cafe in Brisbane. Special guests were the then Premier Mr. W. Kidston, his Minister for Railways, Geo. Kerr (always favourably disposed to the all-grade union), J. W. Blair, MLA and Dave Bowman, one who never relaxed his efforts, in and out of Parliament, on behalf of the organized workers. In an address Kidston, referring to the long-sustained campaign for the shorter working day, said; "The gospel of discontent is the best gospel preached. It has been the root of all progress, and changed us from the savages stained with wood whom Caesar found in Britain into what we are. But men may be discontented and not do good. There are two kinds of discontent – one sears one's nature, the other kind tries to make the worse better."

November 1907 saw R. Philp back as premier but so shaky in the saddle, at a time of great political uncertainty, that a Kidston-Philp coalition was formed with Kidston as Premier, in February 1908. Strengthening his position, Kidston lead the House until the D. F. Denham Government came in, in 1911. In the meantime the railway portfolio had passed from friend Geo. Kerr to J. D. Campbell, and then

on to W. T. Paget, who carried it through a stormy period from 1908 to 1915. There had been a change of commissioners in 1902 when J. F. Thallon replaced R. J. Gray. He remained Commissioner for Railways until 1911.

The increasing strength of the union movement in the railways was being reflected in results coming from well-prepared representations to those in administrative positions. A schedule of new pay rates and conditions, drawn up by a "classification committee" of the all-grade union, was discussed with the Commissioner in 1910, with a fair degree of success. Thallon would not risk trouble at the ministerial level by lending support to one matter raised, the wiping out of Rule 18 (anti-politics). But he went so far as to promise the union that "So long as a man does not appear on a public platform in uniform, or use his citizen rights so far as to be disloyal, I will not interfere with him irrespective of what party is in power." A fair step forward for railwaymen, in view of the interpretation held then in high places as to full citizen rights of workers. The promise was kept by Thallon but his successor in office, T. M. King (Commissioner only for a short period in 1911), had his own idea of how it should be kept. A prominent unionist, Albert Welsby, was dismissed from the Service as the result of his participation in the campaign at Ipswich for the election of Labor Party candidates, whilst others equally prominent in support of opposing candidates escaped the attention of the Commissioner.

Although the liquidation of militant railwaymen by dismissal was being less freely resorted to, transfers – under the guise of "to meet the exigencies of the service" – remained a popular measure in high places for dealing with the too outspoken, and there was an ever widening choice of out of the way places to hussle them off to. Branch line work was receiving a lot of attention, and new small depots were being opened up.

Official records show that railway building continued apace from 1905, and of the total of 2983 miles (4800 km) of new track (1728 miles [2780 km] being branch lines) put down between 1905 and 1924, all but a small percentage were in service when the First World War flared in 1914. This solid foundation for a State-wide railway service continued to be built upon and, although the economic depression of 1928–31 cut across railway building, by 1953 the ubiquitous steam-coughing locomotives were shuttling their trains over the grand total of 6570 miles (10,571 km) of track, presented to the State by a legion of railway builders – their strenuous labours, and

often heavy sacrifices, bearing witness north, south, east and west. This total mileage had been reduced to 5954 (9580 km) by 1964 through closures.

From 1907 began a comparatively bright stretch of a few years for the railway staff. Their lot was to improve in a number of ways, and relieving the long-existing master and servant relationship was a continuing upward trend in union organization. Frequent representations were made to the minister and commissioner pressing claims on behalf of the staff.

A minimum wage for all adult male employees became a matter of constant agitation following the Harvester standard being laid down by Justice Higgins for the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in 1907. A minimum payment of 8s. (80c) per day, for a forty-four hour week was sought for all maintenance employees. Opportunities for those with long service in the north and west to transfer to centres more to their choice were requested. The constant dread of trying to exist when off work due to an accident on the job was somewhat eased by the Government agreeing to issue an Executive minute making compensation payable from the date of the accident instead of as from two weeks after, as provided in the Workers' Compensation Act of 1906. Compensation payment was on the basis of fifty per cent of the weekly wage, with a maximum payment of £1 ($2) per week. Juniors received full wage up to 10s. ($1) per week.

Conditions and rates of pay for apprentices were improved, and instead of having to serve six years as journeymen – after completing a five years apprenticeship – before receiving the top rate for a tradesman, the Commissioner was prevailed upon to reduce the six years to four. Increases in pay rates to bring them more in line with those operating in outside industry were secured.

Staff appointments to vacancies, occurring with increasing frequency, were made with no consideration whatever given the wishes or circumstances of the appointee. The QREA continually pressed for all vacancies to be advertised in the *Government Gazette* and applications for appointment invited. It was not for a number of years that this measure was introduced. The *Weekly Notice* that railwaymen have for so long now accepted as a matter of course, and which they scan eagerly for advice on vacancies, appointments, as well as other matters relating to their jobs, represents the climax of union persistancy.

The all-grade union council saw further proof of sustained effort

being ultimately rewarded. In 1908 negotiations with the Commissioner took place on suggested increases in rates of pay, and the provision of long-service leave. An amendment to the Staff Regulations subsequently appeared later in the year granting long-service leave to members of the staff with fifteen years or more service.

A new Staff Regulation was compiled in 1908 with increases in salary and wage rates. The increases dated from July but were not paid until the end of the year in the Christmas pay packet, when £53,000 ($106,000) back pay to July was distributed among approximately eight thousand railwaymen. A Christmas savings account by compulsion.

During 1910–11 some changes occurred in administration positions (the Denham Government had taken over on 2 February 1911) with new men bringing changed approaches to matters effecting the Service. Certain changes brought complaints from employees in some sections and much time was spent by union representatives ironing them out with railway administrative officers. It was in 1911 that C. B. Evans became Commissioner for Railways.

With a continually growing membership, and additional branches springing up, the all-grade union leaders never ceased advocating amalgamation of all unions so that railwaymen could speak with one single effective voice. Unfortunately the unions were quietly growing in number and diversity. Back in 1906 an endeavour had been made to link with the QREA the Engine Drivers', Firemen, and Cleaners Association (EDF & C) and the Guards' Association, these being the three main organizations functioning outside the workshops where, beside the all-grade union, there were, at the time, only a few craft unions functioning. (By 1910 the all-grade union was sharing membership of workshop employees with the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Boilermakers' Society, Moulders Union, Progressive Carpenters, plus a Blacksmiths' Society which formed some time later.) The attempt at amalgamation in 1906 failed.

A strong appeal for the amalgamation of the sectional organizations with the QREA was made in 1910. The advantages that would flow from the suggested merger were set out in a circular letter with the suggestion that a conference of representatives be arranged to discuss the matter. In reciting this further failure to rationalize unionism in the Queensland Railway Service, the ARU *Advocate,* many years later set out some blistering comment:

> The Station Masters' Association "regretfully advised that their rules precluded their amalgamation with any organisation whose members are subordinate in rank to the position of station master." What their rank was worth may be imagined from the fact that the commencing salary of a station master was £120 [$240] per annum, and the first-class man (a position which the majority of them could never hope to attain) received £250 [$500] per annum. According to a statement published by the organisation about that time 59% of the station masters were in the fifth class (£120–£144) [$240–$288] and 19% in the fourth class (£156–£168 [$312–$336] per annum). The Guards Association expressed the opinion "that the time was not ripe" for an amalgamation. [The Guards' Association (it became Guards, Shunters and Conductors Association) amalgamated with the ARU (Queensland branch) in 1974.] How often has that been made the excuse for not doing things? To that opinion can be traced much that is to be regretted in Labor's history. Other organisations made similar excuses. Not in one case was any argument advanced against the case for amalgamation, nor is any case attempted against it today – as on that occasion in 1910 snobbishness, stupid ignorance, or foolish prejudice still prevents this key industry from becoming perfectly organised.

However, this campaign for saner unionism attracted interest throughout the State and engendered much discussion, and argument, among railwaymen. As a result one sectional organization, the not so long operating Traffic Association, indicated a willingness to confer with a view to amalgamation, and the all-grade union in the central division (still operating as an independent body, like its counterpart in the north) intimated it was ready to link up with the south. The three bodies amalgamated, drew up an acceptable constitution and the combined membership ballotted in a set of officers. In their fervour they added another word to the enlarged all-grade union, it became the Queensland United Railway Employees' Association. Some years later a Traffic Employees' Union emerged as a breakaway group. Always recognized with contempt by even the smallest of the other unions for apparent lack of decent union principles, it continues to scramble ineffectually along.

The burst of union activity, and its significance being recognized in administrative circles, was bringing improvement in the poor lot of the fettlers and others in the maintenance section. The 8s. (80c) per day minimum wage was being paid in 1911, with only two exceptions – fettlers in the south and central divisions, and flying gang labourers in the south, had to accept 7s. 6d. (75c) per day during their first six

months service.

There was increased responsibility placed upon men concerned with train running, and track maintenance, when, in 1911 the Railway Service had matured to the stage of larger and more powerful locomotives being considered necessary for the hauling of heavier trains. The C16 class began running. With eight driving wheels coupled they hauled the Sydney mail for some time. As their number increased they were soon out pulling stock and heavily-loaded goods trains. Local firms supplied a total of 152. Some of them remained almost until the end of steam. In the early 1940s a few, accompanied by Queensland enginemen, were loaned to the Commonwealth Railways as a contribution to the war effort of the nation. Another introduction in 1911 was the B17 class loco with six driving wheels coupled. These were the largest to be introduced, unassisted by superheated steam. When not kept in tip-top condition, the fireman worked like a galley slave. The Ipswich Workshops built twenty-one of them and they were used first on important passenger trains.

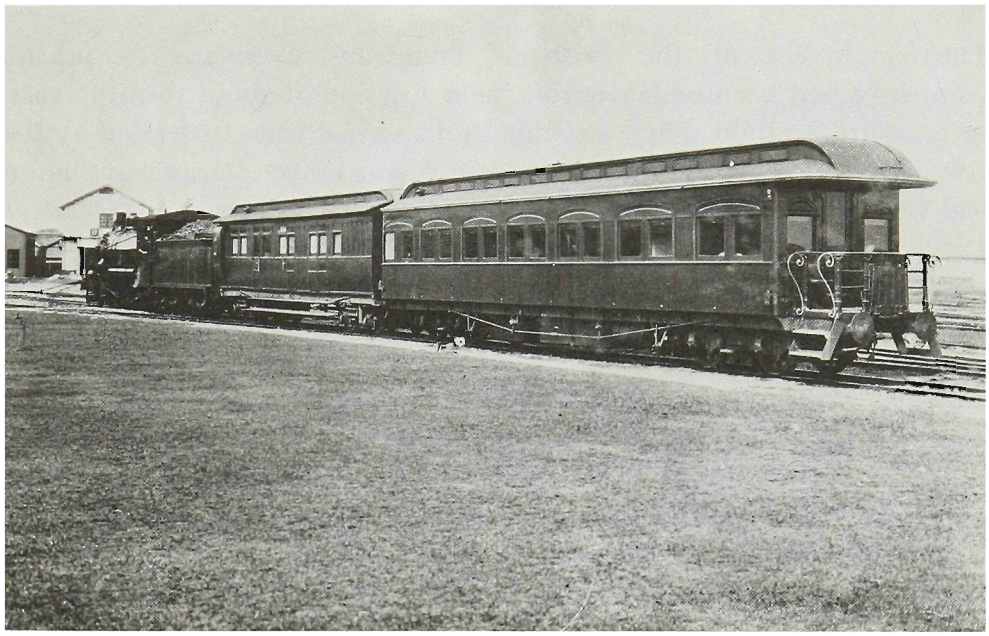
With railway expansion went an ever-broadening development of unionism in the Service. Despite organizational divisions, railwaymen were being drawn towards the union movement. The most reluctant fell into the ranks of the sectional outfits, but still they had come to recognize the need for some type of worker organization, necessary for protection of their jobs and to ensure activity of some kind for relief from harsh working conditions and glaring injustices, extending to outright indignities, imposed by those with the power to hire and fire.

In comparison to the craft and sectional organizations, with their shallow policies centred entirely on the day-to-day grievances of members (moans and groans they were sometimes termed), the all-grade union from its foundation was based upon a philosophy that, in the final analysis, the only real hope for all mankind to stand erect in full equality was in a socialist society. In this the union was supporting the central plank of the Australian Labor Federation's platform. This imposed upon the all-grade union the necessity of struggling on two fronts. On the one hand there was the constant battle for the enlightenment and support of the men on the job, on the other hand there was the battle against the special attention coming from the employer – the Government – through its supporting minions holding authority in the railway department. These men siezed any opportunity to stamp upon those prominent in the union, seeing in the principle they espoused a horrible threat to society, and the main culprits those

who encouraged railwaymen to act in a manner "above their station".

However, it could not be said that, over a number of years to the end of 1911, there had been any serious stepping out of line by Queensland railwaymen, no matter how much they may have found to be aggrieved about, as they contributed in their many differing occupations to extend, maintain, run and improve the State's so important land transport system.

But, as 1912 opened, the story changed suddenly and violently as unionists, impelled by the force of union principles, went to the aid of Brisbane tramwaymen battling for the right to form a union.



The Governor's car built in 1903, and the kitchen car built in 1912. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

Chapter Nine

I don't care if the cause be wrong or if the cause be right:
I've had my day and sung my song and fought the bitter fight.

Henry Lawson: *Too Old to Rat*

The employees of the Brisbane Tramways Company (a private company) had been endeavouring, over a period of about twenty years, to establish a union. Each attempt to do so had been frustrated by the company sacking those in the forefront of the move. A tramways union had been registered Federally in the south in 1910 and at the end of 1911 recruiting began in Brisbane for the formation of a branch. As a sign of solidarity and encouragement to others, members wore a union badge. The badge-wearers were quickly sacked and the company employed non-unionists in their places.

The Australian Labor Federation arranged a meeting of union representatives to consider the matter. They met in the Brisbane Trades Hall on Sunday 28 January 1912, and the important unions represented were those covering railwaymen, waterside workers and seamen. It was decided that unless the tramways union was recognized "a general cessation of work" be declared from the following Tuesday evening at six o'clock. The decision included the right of trammies to wear the union badge.

The company ignored the ultimatum and the historic strike began as planned. The first morning of the strike the official strike bulletin came out in a style calculated to stiffen the morale of any army. Proudly it proclaimed:

> The Workers Raise the Flag of Solidarity . . . First Simultaneous Strike in the World . . . At 6 o'clock last night the signal was given to down tools. Brisbane unionists nobly responded . . . Superb Demonstration this morning . . . City Business Ceases . . . Unparalleled Proof of the Solidarity and Power of Labor . . . Brisbane Toilers Class-conscious at Last.

Such a triumphant declaration had some justification. Over 20,000 Brisbane unionists had stopped work and little business was possible in the city. At Ipswich railwaymen and miners were on strike. In the far north 14,000 members of several unions ceased work in support. In the south seamen and waterside workers had placed a tight black ban on the Brisbane port. From the first day thousands of unionists marched in solid ranks through Brisbane's streets, sometimes led by members of both the State and Federal Parliamentary Labor Party. Foremost among them was the never-wavering Dave Bowman. History marks him as in the leadership of the strike – the most disruptive and widespread Australia had known – a strike which caused panic in high places by the spontaneous support it immediately drew. Bowman at the time was Leader of the Queensland Parliamentary Labor Party, and far from being a well man.

No record seems to exist of E. G. Theodore – elected member of the northern seat of Woothakata in 1909 – being noticeably prominent in support of the 1912 strike. In 1908, "Red Ted", as leader of the Amalgamated Workers' Association, had enrolled the navvies finishing the building of the Etheridge railway in north Queensland in this association. The navvies were on strike against wage reductions. The strike lasted about three months and the AWA organized twenty-eight strike camps along the line. With the help of Dave Bowman, representations to Premier Kidston brought about a settlement. By 1912 Ted Theodore seems to have begun shedding the "Red", although he had said in Parliament: "Men who are dissatisfied and have come to the conclusion that the ordinary methods of improving their conditions, or securing redress of their grievances, are not suitable to the occasion have to resort to other means, even violence." But 1912 was a time to tread warily. With Dave Bowman likely to relinquish the leadership of the Parliamentary Labor Party, it was either Theodore or T. J. Ryan who would fill the vacancy. And the growing popularity of the Labor Party indicated the definite likelihood of Labor soon being elected to govern. Whilst it looked good to have Labor Party politicians striding along the streets of Brisbane with them now and again, the 1912 strikers were to find that, when the real crash came and the demonstrating workers were set upon in a most violent manner, they looked in vain to their political gods for help.

Division of railwaymen in a number of organizations created confusion as to loyalties and posed difficulties for those striving for the closest unity in support of the trammies, as well as for the protection of

railwaymen. This, however, exposed the strong from the weak on union principles.

The day before the strike decision was to take effect, the executives of the QUREA, Guards Association and the Engine Drivers' Firemen and Cleaners' Association met the Deputy Railway Commissioner, Mr. W. Pagan, at his invitation. Adding weight on the side of law and order, the Minister for Railways, Mr. W. T. Paget, also came along. The concern of the Minister and Deputy Commissioner was to keep up the supply of coal to the Tramways Department by the Railway Department. The EDF & C sought to shelter behind the Commissioner. They brought to the meeting a resolution the executive had carried, as follows:

> That we, as a body of members of Queensland Loco Enginemen, Fireman & Cleaners' Association protest against handling coal hewn, or loaded by non-union labour for the Brisbane Tramways Company during the period of the lock-out, and we claim the protection of the Commissioner for Railways in our action, as we have no desire as public servants to take an active part in an industrial struggle.

The Deputy Commissioner shook the executive of this organization from under his wing by piously proclaiming that "as a common carrier the Commissioner could not discriminate and refuse to accept coal for transport to the Tramways Company". The unions were asked to handle all coal that was "on wheels" at six on the Tuesday evening, the commencing time for the cessation of work. The Deputy Commissioner promised that railwaymen would not be asked to handle coal for the Tramways stored in a railway siding at Normanby, in the Brisbane area. It had been stock-piled there in anticipation of the strike and the promise given by the Deputy Commissioner was meaningless as it did not require handling by railwaymen.

The representatives of the EDF & C and Guards Association agreed to the proposal of the Deputy Commissioner, the QUREA men would not, but when pressed agreed to put it before a scheduled mass meeting of members. They knew that the amount of coal on wheels was about 1000 tons (1016 t), enough to keep the tramways going for three weeks. This could play havoc with the strike.

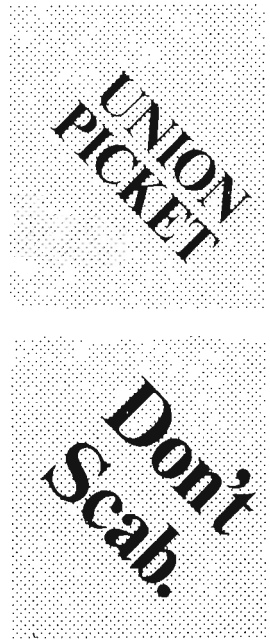
At the mass meeting of QUREA members that packed Brisbane's old Protestant Hall in Ann Street, the proposal of the Deputy Commissioner was noisily rejected. A motion calling on all members to cease work immediately was carried, with only fourteen in dissent. A

strike committee was elected with E. M. (Ned) Hanlon as chairman. Ned Hanlon was to later enter Parliament and from 1946 until 1952 was Labor premier of Queensland. (In 1948 he found himself facing up to a hurrican of trade union dissent fiercer than that of 1912. He met it in a manner not calculated to preserve any of the standing in the labor movement he might have still retained as a one time solid unionist leading railwaymen into industrial battle.) Elected secretary of the 1912 railway strike committee was a young railwayman named Tim Moroney who, rapidly becoming prominent in railway union affairs, went on to fill the position of Queensland Secretary of the Australian Railways Union, a position he held for many years. At all times firmly entrenched in basic union principles, springing from a socialist outlook, with outstanding ability as debater, public speaker and Industrial Court advocate, Tim worked unceasingly for advanced trade unionism. He gave union leadership of the highest order over many years during which railway unions, and particularly the ARU, were subjected to a series of virulent attacks.

Other members of the historic railway strike committee of 1912 were Mick Kirwin, Joe Sherry, Jack Kelvin, Joe McCarthy, Charlie Knight and Tom Brown. The next morning they were out on the novel experience, for railwaymen, of picketing work places. It was soon found that in the southern division the number of railwaymen who had ceased work was little short of 2000, and over 400 of them were casual workers some of whom held membership in no union. The great bulk of railway strikers were members of the all-grade union. Many lad porters struck and, surprisingly for that period, railway clerks pioneered strike particpation for white collar workers by joining in.

From then onwards clerical worker members of the ARU, by and large, set an example as staunch unionists to their contemporaries in both railway and other industrial unions that covered clerks. Some paid severely for this at times. There are interesting cases of railway clerks who survived the years of being "marked" men, due to their leadership in times of revolt by Queensland railwaymen, to eventually rise to high railway administrative positions. One, who distinguished himself at one time as a red-blooded strike committee secretary (and the railway upheaval was no minor one), by virtue of his competency as a railwayman, climbed to a railway administrative post little below that of commissioner – which position he may have reached had Father Time not interfered.

As the 1912 strike developed Railway Commissioner Evans



Badge worn in strike of Brisbane tramwaymen, 1912. This badge is owned by Norm Pendock (Brisbane), retired railway conductor. He participated in the strike as a lad porter.

constituted a Commissioner's Committee as a measure of assistance in keeping the Railway Service functioning with a depleted staff. Leading figures from the railway unions that had run for cover were appointed to the committee. Very attractive committee medallions were struck and presented to the chosen ones, as badges of authority, and honour. Each medallion was boldly embossed with the letters "CC". The authority advertised by the medallions may have courted recognition from those on the job, but the wearers were most "honoured" by strikers applying their own words to the two letters. None of the medallion-decorated was ever heard to boast of wearing it when the strike ended, nor was anyone seen wearing one after. But memory of it was kept fresh for a long time by bitter reference among railwaymen throughout the State. No representative of the all-grade union was on the Commissioner's Committee.

Immediately the strike commenced the Commissioner called upon the striking railwaymen to return to work or consider themselves dismissed from the Service. Few, if any, were intimidated by the threat.

Then came the brutality of Black Friday. Union demonstrations in the streets had been forbidden. The Denham Government had recruited 3000 special constables (shades of the '91 shearers' strike). Protection was being provided for scabs. A mass of peacefully-marching strikers was set upon by police, on foot and mounted, with fixed bayonets and drawn swords. Police batons thumped on heads and some of the marchers failed to escape the horses hooves. One of the batons that could have drawn blood that infamous day still lies in the Brisbane Trades Hall office of the Tramways Union (now all bus workers), a grim reminder of the traumatic birth of the union. The savagery of Black Friday brought an immediate cessation of work by the whole workshop staff and those at the goods shed in Townsville, in protest against the bashing and supporting the trammies' cause. They returned to work a day or so after on the urging of the strike committee and were asked to render financial support. Desperate to curb the sooling of the State's armed forces upon them, the unionists turned to the mates they had made politicians, as generals in the advance guard of the workers' battles. T. J. Ryan, rising Labor Party leader, did attempt to do something by leading a deputation to Premier Denham seeking the convening of Parliament. The strike committee sent a frantic call to Prime Minister Andy Fisher and the Commonwealth Labor Government pleading for protection against the State police, and appealing for troops to be sent "to maintain law and order". Both pleas failed. The

Labor parliamentarians were enmeshed in that "ready-made State machinery" which they could not "wield" for the workers' desperate purposes.

Of course the bones of the red bogie were set clattering by some. One Government supporter wrote in the firm belief that the unionists were out to capture Brisbane for socialism, but at the end of his tirade he provided hope for the Government by predicting the move would fail.

At a meeting of members of the Enginer Drivers, Firemen and Cleaners' Association at one centre, an executive officer of the Association, explaining why the Association did not participate in the strike, put forward this profound political analysis:

> After the tramways employees affiliated with the Australian Labor Federation it was then said there was a struggle between unionism and Capitalism. I say it became a struggle in that way for the very simple reason that men who were engaged in private firms, and who had no dispute with them, downed tools and left work. This, of course, made the employers take sides with the capitalists and it then became a question of unionism and Capitalism, but it was made so by the Australian Labor Federation.

This masterly summary did not fool many of the members throughout the State who saw the matter in a simpler light and, in disapproval of the weakness of the Association, transferred to the QUREA.

As the strike entered its fourth week, hopes were raised that a satisfactory settlement would be reached at a conference arranged by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. Mr. J. S. Badger attended as manager of the tramways (history gives him prominence mainly on two counts – he kept the tramways paying dividends and organized scab labour). It was recommended at the conference that the tramways company agree not to dismiss employees for wearing the union badge, but the Court had no authority to order the re-employment of those sacked. As the tramways were fully operating by then with recruited free labor Mr. Badger had no reason for concern about badge wearing.

The strike dragged wearily into the fifth week with a feeling of oppression weighing heavily upon the unionists. They were tasting the bitter draught of defeat. The strike committee, forced to accept the obvious, advised the strikers on 5 March to offer for whatever work was available. Guarantees against victimization could not be obtained.

The striking railwaymen stood out till the end. For re-employment

in the Railway Service they were required to submit applications to a board of inquiry appointed by the Commissioner. For some, decisions by the board only proved what they were firmly convinced of, they had been sorted out early as "not to be re-instated under any consideration". This was not to be the only time the Railway Department complied a "black list". Whilst most of the railwaymen were allowed to return to the Service after the strike, many had to accept punitive transfers to other centres, and all forfeited their previous service. Some two years later representations at ministerial level finally secured the re-instatement of the black listed ones, as vacancies occurred. However, not until 1917 were these men restored to their former positions, as far as was possible after such a lapse of time.

The central figures in the strike, the tramways unionists, fared worst of all. It was not until 1923 when the tramways were taken over by the Brisbane Tramways Trust that the old trammie unionists had an open door for employment where jobs were once sacrificed at the altar of unionism and mateship.

Railwaymen soon settled back into their jobs of running railways. The strike, whilst causing confusion and some disharmony among the men, had raised a greater interest in unionism. And despite failure in the main objectives of the five weeks battle, during which the right spirit and solidarity was maintained constantly against an intensity of opposition unsuspected and not bargained for in the beginning, valuable experience was plentiful and lessons learned to usefully serve the union movement in the future. The education of unionists as to the implications of a general strike, its challenge to the existing order, and the permissable scope and duration of a general strike in a given situation, particularly one not ripe for mass insurrection, had begun in earnest.

The all-grade unionists in north Queensland realized the advisability of linking up with the men in the south. By 1913 they had joined forces and the QRU (Queensland Railways Union) had replaced the old QUREA. The all-grade railway union had achieved its goal of being a State-wide organization.

Fettlers who had, prior to 1912, been chary of becoming unionists were contending with departmental economy measures. Manpower of gangs was being reduced and the mileage of line to be maintained by a gang increased. They, accepting the advice of mates who were already unionists, began enrolling in the all-grade union. But, before the confusion eddying from the strike had time to settle, a sectional

organization of maintenance men had been set up, the Railway Maintenance Union. Another large section of railwaymen became divided as two unions competed for their membership. Some in South Brisbane formed a Signalmen's Association, but had second thoughts the next year and joined up with the all-grade union.

In 1916 a group of signalmen decided the Railway Service couldn't get along without an association devoted solely to the care of signalmen. The Queensland Railway Signalmen's Association resulted, and as a tiny, anaemic thing to this day functions as "a curiosity in railway unionism", as someone once described it. The Railway Maintenance Union has continued operating since first formed – one of the twenty-three, or more, organizations impressing a crazy network of division upon railway unionism in Queensland, a handicap with which railwaymen in no other state of the Commonwealth are unfortunate enough to be burdened.

Although there was some messing about in the field of unionism after the 1912 disturbance, it seems the railway strikers did not return to the Railway Service in abject servility, as some expected and hoped, nor was the railwayman's expectation of brightening his future by "bumping men into Parliament" dampened. With a State election coming up, campaigning began immediately to have railwaymen elected. Four contested seats: M. J. Kirwin in Brisbane; W. V. Hefferan, Bremer; J. Sherry, South Brisbane; C. Waldron, Toowoomba. The only one successful was the widely popular Mick Kirwin – a platform foreman – who was big in stature, gifted with a stentorian voice that carried well beyond the confines of the station when announcing the arrival or departure of a train.

From 1912 the Queensland railway story is one of a continually expanding railway service, constantly starved for finance and forced to carry a never-reducing load of interest payments, with railwaymen forever struggling against the Railway Department which constantly endeavoured to relieve its chronic penury by keeping salaries and wages at unjust levels, and providing miserable job amenities, or none at all. It is a story of the never-ceasing battle by the organized railwaymen to raise their economic standards, improve working conditions, and maintain them at a level somewhere near those of workers in outside industries. That the battle has at no time been easy can be judged from the serious upheavels that have frequently rent the Railway Service as railwaymen were forced into head-on confrontation with governments that, according to the theory and ethics of the game, should be "model employers".

Chapter Ten

But She to whom in all the lands
The toilers stretch beseeching hands –
Democracy, the Soul of all,
Marks where her faithful servants fall.
They seek not things that others seek
Who battle for the weak.

Geo. Essex Evans

Industrial tranquility in the Queensland Railways following the 1912 strike did not continue for long. Early in 1914 a portion of the railway staff was in a strike situation, for once around a purely railway matter – a fair wage for men in workshops.

Tradesmen in general were complaining against the disparity in their rates of pay when compared to those paid in outside industry. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers decided to do something about it and sought an increase of twenty-five per cent for its members. The Queensland Railways Union threw in full support for the claim. This union had already been pushing a claim for 9s. (90c) per day minimum wage and a forty-four hour week, and was looking for support from other organizations to improve the wages not only of tradesmen, but all railway workers.

On 27 July members of the ASE, impatient at the delay in receiving any satisfactory reply to the request for the increase, struck work in Townsville. Members of the QRU came out of the workshops with them. Other groups of workers became involved. Engine drivers refused to take out locomotives repaired by other than the regular tradesmen (locomotive foremen were attending to repairs under instructions). The Department managed to get some locomotives out to run trains and this resulted in employees in the traffic section, guards, shunters and porters, becoming involved. The original strikers were joined by 127 men and boys in the traffic section. About 230 locomotive men and 108 others struck work.

The First World War was the strike breaker. Appeals to patriotism brought most of the strikers back to work. The ASE endeavoured for a while to keep the strike alive, but ultimately returned to work under the best arrangements they could make.

The strike sprung one more railway union into existance, but only temporarily. Indicative of the flimsy union ties stretching across the considerable distance from the north to the south, the QRU members in Townsville, peeved at being reproved by their State Council for the manner of their participation in the strike (approval of the Council had not been given), broke away in a huff and sulkily set up a second all-grade union, the Amalgamated Railway Union. However, such a split among men with identical views and aims could not last long and the Townsville men were back in the QRU fold in time to be in the forefront of another strike, the Northern Strike of 1917, and the first under a Labor government.

The Labor movement was greatly heartened in 1915 when in the Queensland state elections, held in May of that year, Labor Party candidates won forty-five of the seventy-two seats. A resounding victory! Among those who lost their seats were Denham, his treasurer, home secretary and ministers for public instruction and agriculture. For the first time Queensland had a "Workers' Government" with all that the union movement believed this implied for the betterment of the workers' lot and, as the socialists among them hoped, giving impetus to the struggle against capitalism.

Evidence was soon to come that the right to visit a polling booth every two or three years was only one step forward in the struggle, and that people have little power over Parliament and none at all over the other political institutions of the State. One thing the socialists in Queensland must surely have reckoned with was that the Labor Party had no socialisation plank in 1915. It was not until 1921 that the "socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange" was adopted as the "objective" of the Australian Labor Party. And it is a philosophy most, if not all, politicians carrying the tab of Labor these days go in fear and trembling of lest they be forced to mention it as they bend over backwards being respectable. There is no recognition of the class struggle as this cuts into vote catching; yet workers whose votes they expect have the fact that the class struggle has not been wished away born home to them every day as they struggle, unceasingly, for an appropriate share of the social wealth they, and all other useful people, produce.

On 1 June 1915 T. J. Ryan assumed office as premier, with his deputy E. G. Theodore as treasurer and minister for public works. The Minister for Railways was J. Adamson, who only held the portfolio until 1916 when it passed to J. H. Coyne. He carried it to 1918 when J. A. Fihelly took over this least attractive portfolio. And so began fourteen unbroken years of Labor government.

Now free of the old nagging governmental antagonism, unionism – particularly in the Railway Service – quickly strengthened. For the QRU (later ARU) it was the opening of its most glittering period. It had, and drew to it, men who realized how vital it was to Labor that railway workers, operating a key industry, should be as scientifically organized as possible. With a policy more advanced than any other organization in the Railway Service, the all-grade union rapidly increased its membership. By the late 1920s the membership of over 10,000 embraced at least one-third of the total staff employed in the Queensland Railway Service.

By 1916 the QRU was compaigning intensively throughout the State. Propaganda work was to begin in earnest. Railwaymen were encouraged to interest themselves in working class education. By the 1920s Worker Educational Association groups were forming, railwaymen were gathering in Plebs' Leagues for study classes and lectures by academics who were in sympathy with the Labor movement. The Warwick branch of the QRU created a little piece of history by, as early as 1915, sending to the union conference an agenda item for "the socialisation of the production, manufacture and distribution of foodstuffs, and other commodities in universal use". It received the support of the conference and was forwarded on to the Federal Labor Party. Railwaymen were preparing themselves for troubles and battles that lay ahead.

Chapter Eleven

How long, how long, in infinite Pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute.

Omar Khayyam

Before the close of 1916 the railway unions were registered under the Industrial Arbitration Act and it was necessary to prepare a claim for a Court Award; an historic proceedings as, for the first time, Queensland railwaymen were to have wages, hours, and in many aspects conditions of employment, determined by an independent authority. This was an important departure from the proceedure of having to influence the commissioner for improvements in such matters whilst he held his staff in bondage under his Staff Regulations. It was left to the QRU to set about preparing a claim to cover all grades in the Service. But much was to happen before the Court heard and considered it.

In November of 1916 boilermakers in the railway workshops at Townsville were in dispute with the Commissioner and ceased work demanding rates of pay equal to those paid outside, and to the payment of "dirt money". In February of 1917 the dispute was finally resolved by the demands being granted. The matter had not been taken before the Industrial Court. The members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, still smarting from the way they had been defeated in 1914 on a similar claim, put forward a demand for increases comparable with those allowed the boilermakers, and threatened to stop work. The Department agreed to the justice of the claim and granted increases of 3s. 6d. (35c) per day, as from 19 February, the date for the boilermakers' increases.

Not unexpectedly, calls came from other unions operating in the workshops for a flow-on of the increases to their members. Representations to the minister concerned brought the advice to submit the matter to the Industrial Court. The reply of the men in Townsville to this was a stopwork meeting of all Townsville railwaymen, held on 23 February. The meeting finally decided in favour of the matter being

referred to the Court provided that a claim for increases for all northern railwaymen, previously forwarded to Brisbane, was considered and an assurance given that all increases would date from 19 February. The minister had made a statement to union representatives, and to the press, that matters of retrospectivity would be left to the Court to decide.

In view of the situation developing in the north, the QRU hurried to serve a claim covering northern workshops men on the minister, although it had been intended to consolidate this in the claim for an award for all railway employees in the State.

The Court called the parties into conference on 27 February. On the question of retrospectivity, the Court said it was prepared "to consider favourably the making of any award retrospective from February 19, so far as related to the claim of the QRU served on the Minister on February 22, and all other questions of retrospectivity to remain open."

On 4 May an award to cover workshops employees in north Queensland was gazetted. It was operative from 19 February. The main claim covering the rest of the Service was duly heard and the award gazetted on 4 July, but it was retrospective only from 1 July.

From the men in the north came an immediate protest claiming breach of faith by the minister for railways in departing from assurances set out in his letter when first replying to the claim, and his promise that the question of retrospectivity would be left entirely to the Court. It had transpired that the commissioner's representative had firmly opposed any retrospectivity during the hearing of the claim. Attempts to have the award varied in respect to retrospectivity failed. A strike ballot throughout the north resulted in an overwhelming vote in favour of a cessation of work and the whole of the Railway Service in North Queensland closed down from midnight on 4 August.

On 13 August, with the Townsville strike committee in receipt of advice that railway depots everywhere in the north were silent and abandoned, Ted Theodore arrived and addressed the strike committee aiming to get the men back to work. This was not the Red Ted who backed the striking navvies on the Etheridge railway in 1908 and organized their strike camps. Theodore had long since abandoned the policy of worker militancy and direct action on the job. Only a few years before Ernest Lane, commenting on the value of arbitration and what he saw as the "dying spirit of revolt within the Australian Workers' Union" born of the 1891 shearers' strike, said of the AWU

that – after it and the Amalgamated Workers' Association (lead by Ted Theodore) had amalgamated in 1913 – "within two or three years this essential spirit of the union became absolutely submerged by moderates of the amalgamation who worshipped at the political shrine and bowed to Arbitration Courts."

The men in Townsville were not impressed by Theodore and he left them still determined to continue the strike.

In Brisbane it was decided to call a trade union congress to consider the strike and the committee in Townsville were invited to send delegates. With five delegates from Townsville present the congress commenced discussion on 23 August and, after two days, came to the decision that the matters giving rise to the strike be submitted to an independent arbitrator. By a ballot of the men on strike this was agreed to and the strike was declared off from midnight on 28 August.

The ARU *Advocate* later set out:

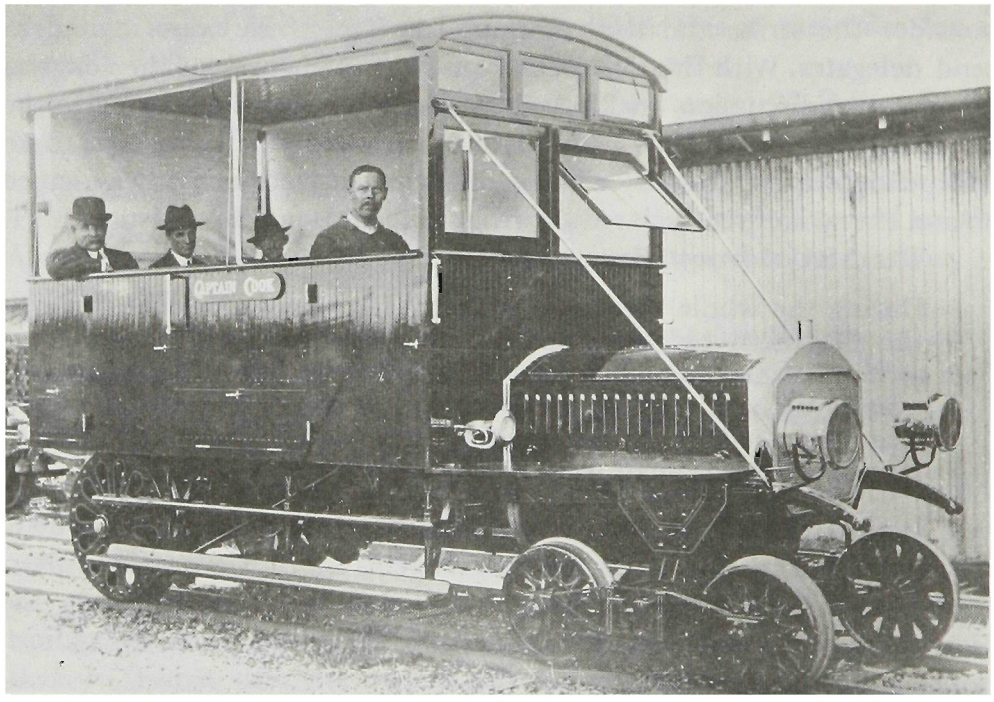
> During the whole three weeks that it lasted not a wheel turned on the Northern railways, and when it is considered that a large section of the men (workshops employees) had nothing to gain even if the strike had been successful, it can be really understood that the feelings of the men regarding their being entitled to retrospective payment were very pronounced.

It was agreed by the disputing parties that one-time Federal Attorney-General, Mr. Justice H. B. Higgins (in J. C. Watson's short lived Labor Ministry of 1904) – he who had brought down the Harvester judgement in 1907, and, still as independent radical, continued his presidency over the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration – should be asked to arbitrate. But they reckoned without Prime Minister Billy Hughes, suffering his second defeat on conscription, and the cartoonists' joy as the ideal figure to caricaturise as a Labor rat turned conservative and conscriptionist. Hughes refused to consent to Mr. Justice Higgins arbitrating on the north Queensland dispute.

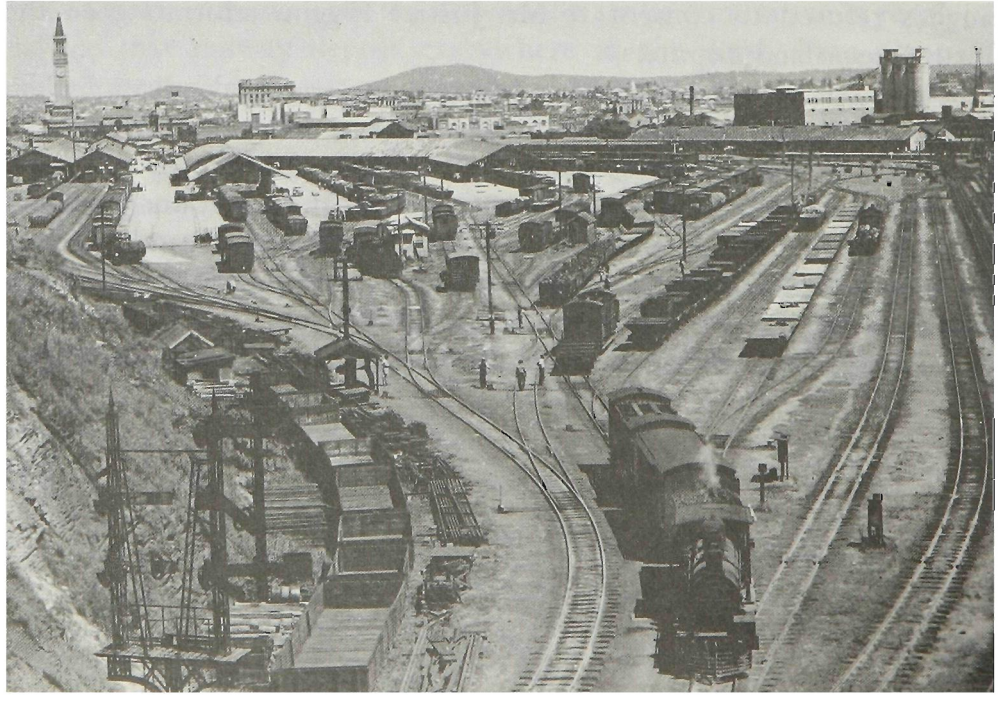
The services of Mr. Justice Stringer, in New Zealand, were then sought. He agreed to arbitrate and the parties to the dispute arranged to prepare their respective cases and forward them to him. After several months, word came from Stringer setting out that he found he could not act on the matter as it was an appeal from an Arbitration Court and, when consenting to give his services, he was under the impression the dispute was an original one.

Time passed with futile attempts being made to find an arbitrator.

The whole thing was fast going cold and the splendid solidarity of the northern men was frittered away. They were never given the satisfaction, poor as it may have been, of receiving an arbitrator's decision on a matter they felt denied them justice. It is because of such spirit-crushing experiences in the past that the trade unions of today are so very wary of being drawn from a solidly organized stand on a matter of job justice by cajoling promises.



Above: *Captain Cook,* the 45 H.P. Napier railcar which was in service from 1916 to 1930. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]
Below: The marshalling yards at the Roma Street Station in Brisbane. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



Chapter Twelve

We are those fools too stubborn willed to bend
Our Necks to wrong and parley and discuss.
To-day we face the awful test of fire –
The prison, gallows, cross – but in the end
Your sons will call their children after us
And name their dogs from men you now admire.

Anon

Guns were out against striking workers again. This time it was in 1919. The central figures were meatworkers in north Queensland taking a stand against wage reductions, worsening of job conditions and a blatant attempt by two meatworks companies to smash the northern section of the meatworkers' union (the AMIEU).

Railwaymen, through loyalty to union principles, became involved. They were treated in a despotic manner by the Government and Railway Department, suffering intimidation, victimization and dis-rating. The story of it all is taken, in the main, from the pages of the *Militant* of 1 September 1919 (later the *Advocate*), the then State journal of the QRU, which had only just taken the place of the four separate union publications circulating in the respective districts of the State. The *Militant* featured a reprint from the union's northern journal *Solidarity* of the events surrounding "The Northern Trouble – The Government, and Black Ban".

The two meat exporting companies operated a short distance out from Townsville, one at Ross River the other at Alligator Creek, the AME Company and QME Company. The two had been endeavouring in 1919, and for some time before, to force the meatworkers to accept wage reductions and a worsening of job conditions. After one attack on the AMIEU which, with the assistance of the Arbitration Court, was fairly successful, the AME and QME Companies evidently sought to consolidate their gains and completely rout the workers' organizations. It was generally known that a number of scabs had been employed at

both works after a strike was declared off, and naturally a certain amount of friction had resulted.

The *Militant* set out the following:

> Shortly after commencing work for the season an attempt was made to cut the wages, in some cases to the extent of over 5s. [50c] per day, but even the scabs resented this, and, as the result of a general walk out, the old rate was restored.
>
> Evidently the companies were over anxious to establish their idea of what conditions should prevail at the works and, with a contemptuous indifference to the wishes of the workers, sought to impose conditions they had long desired to do. Finding these tactics unavailing, other means had to be resorted to, and gradually one by one the unionists were being dispensed with. Whenever a man was put off care was taken to ensure it was a unionist and not one of the scabs.
>
> The natural result, if this practice was to continue, would be that the companies had no union to fight the next season, and everything then just as the companies desired. Without organisation the men would have to accept whatever terms and conditions the companies saw fit to impose, and past history shows just what these would be. A demand from the A.M.I.E.U. for preference to unionists, and when shortening hands the scabs be the first to go, was made on the companies, but the union was forced to take a stand on this question to preserve their organisation from obliteration. The companies absolutely refused to entertain the idea, and so the members of the union were pulled out on strike.

Realizing that if a powerful union such as the AMIEU were defeated other not so strong unions would soon be in the same position, the Townsville Industrial Council called a meeting of the executives of all unions in Townsville to consider the position. It was decided at this meeting that each individual union hold a special meeting of members to define their attitude to the dispute. At the meeting of QRU members it was agreed to support the meatworkers in their endeavour "to establish the right of organised labour to preference in employment". This attitude of the QRU was precisely the same as that adopted by practically every other union. The Waterside Workers had previously, on two occasions, affirmed their determination to do everything possible to assist the AMIEU in re-establishing union labour in the meatworks.

The Alligator Creek and Ross River meatworks were declared "black". Trains stopped running to and from both works as drivers,

firemen and guards in the QRU, EDF & C, and Guards Association, refused to work them. To quote again from the *Militant*:

> The Q.M.E. Company endeavoured to return to Winton about 1200 head of cattle and had them yarded at the Stewart's Creek railway station ready for trucking, despite the railwaymen's absolute refusal to handle the train in any way. A number of men went to Stewart's Creek early on Saturday morning and released the cattle.
>
> On Sunday afternoon the police arrested two men, Carney (Organiser of the A.M.I.E.U.) and Kelly (President of the Industrial Council), and charged them with intimidation, in connection with the release of the cattle. This, of course, was what the meat companies desired. It is an old practice for vested interests to jail the leaders in the event of an industrial trouble.
>
> On Sunday evening the usual open air meeting was held in Townsville, under the "Tree of Knowledge" in the centre of the city. When the jailing of Carney and Kelly became generally known great indignation was expressed and the crowd at the meeting, incensed at the autocratic action of the police, demonstrated their disapproval by marching in a body to the lockup, singing "The Red Flag", "Solidarity", and other working class songs.
>
> When the crowd was in front of the jail one of the most despicable, and indefensible, acts ever perpetuated in Australia was witnessed. Practically without warning the police fired on the crowd of men, women and children. The act was one of lunatics, certainly not of men possessing a scintilla of intelligence. Eight men were wounded, one seriously. It was only by the best of good fortune that more were not wounded, and some killed.
>
> On Monday morning a stop work meeting of all unionists took place in Townsville, starting at 10 o'clock. A tremendously large crowd attended. Considerable excitement prevailed and much indignation was expressed at the action of the police the previous night. At the close of the meeting a number of men decided as the police intended using firearms they would be able to meet them on more even ground if armed also and a raid was made on Rooney's and Alfred Shaw's stores to secure arms and ammunition. The fact that no other business premises were entered, nor any person interfered with indicated very clearly that no idea of looting or violence animated the men. It is true that Mr. Brown, manager of the American Meat Company, was hit but he did not have to go into the hospital.
>
> Offers of bail for Carney and Kelly were frequently made and consistantly refused, for what reason no one could fathom. After the gun raid an offer was made to release both prisoners on bail conditionally on the return of the firearms stolen. The police

knew perfectly well that the strike committee had nothing whatever to do with the raid made on the shops, and this action of the police in trying to implicate the committee was as despicable as it was crude.

We have evidently entered a new era of justice — a sort of brigandage wherein a prisoner is held as hostage for ransom. The ransom in this case was the return of the stolen property. That the prisoners or those asked to return the property had nothing whatever to do with the theft did not, apparently, concern the police except that they realised how helpless they were and resorted to the stupid method as a possible solution of their difficulty. Carney and Kelly were either entitled to bail or not entitled to bail. If entitled to bail no conditions such as suggested should have been imposed, and if not entitled to bail they should not have been let out even conditionally, as proposed.

Both men were, however, released on bail of self in £40 [$80] and one security for £40 [$80] on the Monday evening without any assurance whatever being given. Both were subsequently discharged being found not guilty.

Owing to the necessity of justifying their action in shooting at the crowd on the Sunday night, and to present a black case against the people, the police wired for assistance and we had the spectacle of approximately 100 special police being rushed by rail from Brisbane. What it was intended to do with such an additional force is best known to the authorities in Townsville, but the workers could rest assured they did not come to prevent them being exploited, nor to assist them in their fight against vested interests as represented by the meat companies.

We were not much surprised to find that no obstacle was placed in the way of the police special from Brisbane, because our Southern and Central comrades have yet to learn the universality of organised interests, but we certainly did expect our Hughenden comrades to take a stand against the progress of the train. Mass meetings certainly were held, and numerous telegrams passed between Hughenden and Townsville, but the train ran right through to Charters Towers. Here, however, before the train arrived, the local railwaymen had made a firm decision to refuse to handle the train.

On the Thursday evening a motley collection of railway officials arrived at Charters Towers, full of importance and showing not a little fear, to work the police train to Townsville. Instead of the usual train crew of three on this occasion the train was manned by the following: Acting Deputy Commissioner J. G. Brown (£600 [$1200] per annum and quarters). Divisional Mechanical Engineer R. A. Neild (£600 [$1200] per annum and quarters). Loco Foreman R. Innes (£300 [$600] per annum) Driver of train.

F. McCrystal (£335 [$670] per annum) General Factotum
T. W. Allen (£300 [$600] per annum) Sub. Gen. Factotum
Guard Radloff, guard of the train.

The train was preceeded from Charters Towers by a rail motor, carrying Inspector Hardy (£300 [$600] per annum), and Engineer Fraser (£550 [$1100] per annum). This escort was out of fear that some fettlers might interfere with the road.

No train has ever had such a distinguished or expensive crew. Taking into the consideration the two on the motor the sum total of wages involved in the running of this train averaged at the rate of about £3200 [$6400] per year, or £10 [$20] per diem. The highest rate for locomotives drivers in 1919 was 2s. 4½d. [24c] per hour, for firemen 1s. 10d. [19c] per hour, and for guards 2s. 2½d. [22.5c].

When the train arrived in Townsville no display was made, but as it was proceeding to the running shed the tender of the engine became derailed. The breakdown gang and fettling gang, as well as other members of the staff refused to touch it. It was subsequently re-railed through the efforts of officials only. At a stop work meeting held in Charters Towers the next day it was decided to recommend to Townsville, Hughenden and Cloncurry, that no man work any train with Guard Radloff, also that the Government be asked to remove those officials who scabbed on the unions, within 21 days, failing which further action be considered. This latter was carried having in mind that the State Government was a Labor one and should abhor scabbing. A mass meeting in Townsville carried a motion thanking the unionists in Charters Towers "for their exhibition of solidarity".

Events from then moved rapidly. The railwaymen in Charters Towers and Townsville who refused to handle the police train, and declined to re-rail the tender, were suspended from duty, dis-rated and then ordered to sign a most humiliating document as a condition of re-employment. As soon as this became known to the State Council of the Queensland Railways Union in Brisbane and had been given consideration the Council issued the following resolution:

> That this meeting of the Council of the Q.R.U. expresses indignation at the despotic attitude of the Railway Department and the Government in the treatment of our Northern members, whose loyalty to union principles in connection with the Northern strike has been responsible for the situation created. We commend our members for their adherence to union principles and pledge ourselves to stand behind them, and to loyally support any action that may be taken to secure justice for the men concerned!

The *Militant* went on to explain how branches of the union throughout the southern and central divisions of the State were alerted to the situation likely to develop. Speakers went out to put the case for the northern men.

A deputation waited upon Premier Ryan. Leading the deputation was Tim Moroney, who first rose to prominence when elected secretary of the historic 1912 railwaymens' strike committee. Tim had been appointed QRU State Secretary in 1917. For a couple of hours the deputation argued with Premier Ryan and insisted that the punishment of the suspended men was an "outrage upon the name of Labor". The strong stand taken by the QRU, which could have brought satisfaction for the northern men early, was weakened by the behaviour of representatives from sectional unions. Again to quote from the account given by the *Militant*:

> The Q.R.U. was prepared to put up a fight that would have meant complete victory. The fact that it was interfered with was purely the fault of the Northern delegates (sectional unions). To judge from the conduct of some of them they would far rather see men badly beaten and humiliated than allow the Q.R.U. to secure complete exoneration for them.
>
> It is time the Northern men knew the facts of the case; knew how the policy of the Q.R.U. Council was denied realisation by the intrigues of certain craft union officials who were more concerned about driving the men back to work than removing from them the punishment to which imposition they were subjected. It is almost inconceivable that any group of men could have acted as they did. If the Northern men could have only seen the position, as it was seen in Brisbane, there is not one of them who would not have absolutely repudiated their alleged representatives.
>
> Unfortunately all the efforts of the union were largely lost through the extraordinary conduct of two delegates from the E.D.F. & C. Association, and one or two more. The Q.R.U. stood fast upon the principle that the men concerned had only two alternatives — to obey the union or scab. They refused to betray their manhood by scabbing and, because of that, should have been applauded instead of being treated worse than many criminals. The logic of the Q.R.U. position was absolutely unassailable. The Northern men, from a Labor point of view, did no wrong; and the Government, being a Labor Government, should not punish men for refusing to scab upon their mates. Premier Ryan, and Minister for Railways Fihelly, would have been compelled by the logic of events to have accepted that position if "butters in" had not arrived on the scene, craving "clemency".

> The admission by the E.D.F. & C. delegate that "the men had done wrong" was in direct opposition to the case made by the Q.R.U., who contended that the men had done right and the action of the Government was absolutely wrong and entirely indefensible.

Nevertheless, the QRU Council continued, unrelentingly, pressing the case for the punished men. After further interviews, and protracted discussions with the Premier, Minister J. A. Fihelly (appointed Minister for Railways in 1918), and Commissioner J. W. Davidson (appointed in 1918, he held office until 1938), the suspended men were reinstated to the Service, and allowed shortly after to take up in their former positions, without any loss of status.

One factor that may have finally helped in bringing the Government to clear the matter off the board without further embarrassment was the intention of Ryan to relinquish the premiership and contest the Federal seat of West Sydney, for the ALP and Deputy Leader E. G. Theodore would not have wanted to inherit the controversy when he took over as premier six days after Ryan's resignation on 14 October 1919. J. A. Fihelly became his Deputy Leader.

The meatworkers returned to work believing they had, to some extent at least, clipped the wings of the union-hating meat companies by the union movement's show of oneness in their defence.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Or is it he, the wordy youth,
So early train'd for stateman's part,
Who talks of honour, faith, and truth,
As themes that he has got by heart?

Sir Walter Scott

The Theodore-lead Labor Government quickly became ensnared in troubles, one tumbling upon the other. And if Theodore, as Premier, had set out on a deliberate plan to disillusion the workers as to a Labor government smoothing the road to working class economic and social advancement, he could hardly have done the job better during the five years and four months of his premiership.

The post-war boom was giving way to a recession – some said depression, others spoke of deflation. Anyway, the State was being gripped firmly in the hands of the banks and the economists. Railway financing, never easy, had become a major problem when J. Larcombe took over the portfolio of Minister for Railways in 1920. Many railway lines reaching out into sparsely populated areas were showing poor returns. Pastoral and mining activities, on which the railways depended heavily for revenue, were declining. Over-capitalization of the railways was running unchecked. Railway plant and equipment, with little replacement during the war, was crying out for attention. The railways had suffered by the loss of the services of some 2500 employees who had volunteered for active war service. Commissioner Davidson in his 1920 report said that twenty-five per cent of locomotives had been laid up during the previous year. Much of the other rolling stock, although due for overhaul, had to be kept in service. This added to the trials and tribulations of railwaymen responsible for keeping trains on the move. The Department was forced to place orders for forty new locomotives in 1920, with tenders to be called for an additional 109. Track maintenance had fallen behind badly.

Despite all the difficulties, the railway builders had been out during the war years, and had laid 900 miles (1469 km) of new road during this time. In 1918–19 only seventy-one miles (114 km) could be managed. However, the north-south line reached Mackay in 1921, and Mackay celebrated the event on 24 September. When, in 1924, the unbroken railway from Brisbane to Cairns was completed, Queensland had the longest rail link in Australia – 1043 miles (1678 km).

The new locos that began coming into the Railway Service in 1920 were the C19 and C17 types. The C19s, great hulking brutes, were tough for fireman, with their extra long fireboxes requiring much effort in heaving coal down their full length. With eight coupled driving wheels they were the most powerful locos in the Service until the Garretts arrived, many years later. The unions endeavoured to have the C19s scrapped, or rebuilt, because of their effect on firemen and the Department was eventually brought to realize that men should not be kept working on them for long periods. In all, a total of twenty-six were purchased.

Some hybrid C19 were running around for years. In 1914 three C18 class were purchased, to pull the heavy Sydney mail trains, running via Wallangarra. In 1935 they were given nineteen inch (5 cm) steam cylinders and classed as CC19. Despite objections the C19s operated until the 1950s.

The C17 locos were a far more acceptable type. Superheated, with eight driving wheels, they were identical with the NM class on the Commonwealth Railways. Up to 1953 no less than 223 had been purchased. The last forty taken over were fitted with roller bearings. They were the most versatile, nicely running and free steaming of the large locomotives until the arrival of the six wheels coupled B18¼ class in 1926. They were later joined by the BB18¼.

The 6D17 tanks, with the belly-deep distinctive panting note when standing with the Westinghouse brake pump exhausting, began arriving in 1924 for Brisbane suburban work. The mechanically advanced, and attractive looking DD17, started coming in to replace them in 1948. No. 950 was the 200th locomotive built at the Ipswich Workshops, and was on display at the Queensland Industrial Fair in 1940.

Providing the government departments with necessary funds was a heavy and persistant problem and financiers sought to dictate government policy. The Theodore Government, when Messrs. Money Bags tightened up, did not join battle with them – the attack was turned on the workers, their wages and jobs. From 1921 all the elements that

were to explode into Queensland's State wide 1925 railway strike started to build up.

One man who may have exerted some influence in curbing the heavy handed tactics of Theodore, his Deputy Leader J. A. Fihelly, was early removed from Cabinet. In February 1922 Fihelly was appointed Queensland Agent-General, in London; perhaps having been kicked upstairs to remove a likely challenger to Theodore's leadership, or Fihelly was prepared to accept the opportunity of getting out from under the untenable position he could see Theodore was creating.

It is ironic that the Queensland Labor Government leader turned his attentions to the working masses, just as the Australian Labor Party at last embraced the policy of socialization.

The Interstate Conference of the Australian Labor Party that began its sittings in Brisbane on 12 October 1921 endorsed the recommendation carried at the All-Australian Trade Union Congress held in June 1921 "That the socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange, be the objective of the Australian Labor Party." It was again endorsed at the Annual Convention of the Queensland ALP, held at Emu Park in March of 1923.

At the October 1921 Conference, Theodore sought to water-down the socialization motion with the following amendment:

> That the objective be "the emancipation of Labour from all forms of capitalistic exploitation, and the obtaining for all workers and producers the full reward of their industry by (a) – the nationalisation of those agencies of production, distribution and exchange which are used under capitalism to despoil the community, and (b) – co-operate action in financing, marketing, and distributing primary products."

His amendment attracted only nine supporters to nineteen against.

This had no effect on one-time Red Ted. He went ahead regardless of even his own wishy-washy concept of socialization, which left the citadels of capitalism intact and unhampered. Railway workers felt the blows early. First they were asked to accept a debenture scheme. Each railwayman was to invest portion of his wages in Government debentures so that employment might be provided for all, and no one put off. Short time was occurring in some branches and the available work was to be pooled and shared out. This meant less than a full weeks work with less money. Whilst some of the weak unions were inclined to accept the proposition it was strongly opposed by the main unions and never introduced.

In 1922, flagrantly disregarding Arbitration Court determinations, all public servants were refused their automatic increases, and a five per cent reduction was applied to salaries. The Government announced that it was intended to approach the Arbitration Court for a general reduction in the wages of all government employees. The Queensland Central Executive of the ALP condemned such a move. Undaunted, Theodore announced that in the following session of Parliament he would act not only to reduce the salaries of all public employees, but also members of Parliament.

In the forefront of the opposition to Theodore's grinding moves was the all-grade union – it had taken on added prestige in February 1921 by becoming the Australian Railways Union (Queensland Branch). To amalgamate into one Australian-wide union the all-grade unions operating independently in each State railway service had been a matter of interstate discussions since first mooted in 1900. However, the all-grade union in West Australia never entered the alliance.

Militant unions criticizing Theodore, and the Government came under attack, of course, from that quarter. Active members of the ARU, by virtue of being strewn throughout the Service, were easy marks for transfers. Outspoken boys in Townsville and Rockhampton, particularly, experienced this now familiar method of applying the gag.

On 3 November 1922 ARU State Secretary Moroney wrote to the QCE advising that it had been learned that Theodore and the Premier of New South Wales (J. Dooley) had supported a proposition put forward by Prime Minister Hughes at a Premiers' Conference in November 1921 for the amending of Federal and State Arbitration laws to facilitate wage reductions.

In July of 1922 the Queensland Government had gone before the Arbitration Court seeking a reduction in the State basic wage. The Court obliged and reduced it from £4 5s. ($8.50) to £4 ($8).

At the ALP Convention in 1923, held at Emu Park, the wage reducing policy of the Government came under bitter attack. Before the Convention was a motion calling for an end to the reductions in salaries and the restoration of the basic wage to £4 5s. ($8.50). The motion was defeated thirty-seven to thirty-five. Theodore had apparently been able to wield the big stick over sufficient delegates. He took the attitude that all matters of salaries and wages must be left to Arbitration and at one stage said he refused to take direction.

The ARU *Advocate,* immediately following the Convention, said: "Posterity has had handed down to it the evidence that in 1923 the

State Labor in Politics Convention endorsed the reduction of workers' wages."

The campaign of the unions for a reduction of the working week from forty-eight to forty-four hours was at a high level in 1923. The Emu Park Convention carried a resolution directing the Government to implement the shorter working week, despite opposition by Theodore who claimed that to legislate a forty-four hour week for Queensland workers, without similar action taken in all other States, would adversely effect Queensland industries – an argument that was to be proved false after union pressure forced the introduction of the shorter working week in 1925. The dire effects on the State's industry and commerce, and profits, foretold by Theodore were never felt, nor did the percentage of labour costs to value of total output from Queensland industries soar above the same costs in the southern states still awaiting the forty-four hour week. Statistics in succeeding years showed this.

The attitude of Theodore to matters of worker betterment came under very heavy fire in 1924 and 1925. Even his own union paper, the AWU *Worker,* joined in the attack and said: "The Government should be leading the labour movement in its struggles." Some members of the Labor Caucus began to revolt and Theodore and some of his parliamentary cohorts at one stage threatened to resign.

Chapter Fourteen

It's grand to be a socialist
And lead the grand array
That marches to prosperity
At seven bob a day.

A. B. Paterson

The "Ganger O'Connor Case" has always been looked upon as a sort of curtain raiser to the more dramatic 1925 railway strike which was to be played out immediately after.

Ganger O'Connor was in charge of a fettling gang responsible for maintaining the permanent way (double track) between Wooloowin and Nundah, on the outskirts of Brisbane. Being part of the north-south trunk line it was subjected to continuous fast and heavy traffic.

The too strict economy in the supply of material and equipment, as well as man power, to maintenance gangs had long been a matter for continual complaint from the men and unions. With the weight of responsibility on him for maintaining his length in a safe condition for train running O'Connor was becoming desperate as, despite all efforts of his gang, the whole length of double tracks continued to seriously deteriorate as the result of departmental economy.

The tone of his written requests for help naturally became ever stronger, and evidently irked some of the people "upstairs". The fact that he was a staunch member of the ARU in no way commended him to these people at a time when the whole railway union movement was seething with discontent. The axe fell on O'Connor on 13 August 1925, following a visit of inspection by the commissioner. A train had become derailed on O'Connor's length that day. Stressing his difficulties, O'Connor told the commissioner that "he was prepared to work as a labourer in the gang if anyone else could maintain the road in better condition than he, under the same conditions". He was summarily sacked.

Immediate negotiations by members of the ARU State and

District Executives failed to have O'Connors dismissal lifted. His length was declared black by the ARU and all members of the gang ceased work. During the following week drivers took trains over this section of the line but only at very reduced speed. On Sunday 22 August, ARU locomotive men, at a meeting, decided that no trains should run over O'Connor's length after midnight the next day. The full facts of the case were placed before a stop-work meeting of locomotive men and shunters. The driver scheduled to work the first train over O'Connor's length after mid-night on 23 August was Ike Williams (could a man whose given initials were IWW be anything but a militant unionist?) He refused to work the train. Ike was a prominent ARU member. The rank and file of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen (name had been changed from EDF & C) joined with ARU men in a strict observance of the ban, despite assurances given the Commissioner by their Secretary, J. Valentine, and a representative of the Guards' Association that they would assist in the running of trains over the black length. Men in depots as far away as Warwick and Roma sent word of support for O'Connor and the black ban. On the afternoon of 23 August the dispute was made a matter for a compulsory conference in the Arbitration Court and as a result Ganger O'Connor was reinstated next morning, unconditionally.

In backing O'Connor, enginemen were as concerned as him with the deterioration of the railroad in many places, through no fault of the fettlers. The behaviour of the locomotive when plunging and rolling over weakened sections of track gave enginemen warning.

The anti-climax to the O'Connor whirlwind disturbance was that men, material and extra equipment for his length were sent shortly after he resumed his gangership. Other gangs too in the neighbourhood were strengthened by additional men. A special gang of sixteen men was employed along this length for a number of weeks. This gang laid 500 yards (457 m) of first-grade stone ballast, installed 1300 new sleepers and lifted and repacked the road. O'Connor's stand was fully vindicated. He returned to his job only to be off again shortly after to take part in the big strike.

By the middle of 1925 the feeling among railwaymen had just about reached boiling point. They were almost the only Government employees who had not had the five per cent reduction restored. Although a deputation from other public servants that had waited upon the Premier and Minister on 28 July 1924 was told to take the case for

the restoration of the five per cent to the Arbitration Court they had the reduction discontinued some time later.

A claim on behalf of the railway unions had been lodged in the Arbitration Court for the basic wage to be increased to £4 15s. ($9.50) per week. Figures showed that cost of living increases and other relevant factors since the reduction fully warranted such a basic wage being declared. But there was to be a delay in hearing the claim.

Whilst endeavouring to have the wage reduction restored the railwaymen were campaigning for the right to hold stop-work meetings. They had, in fact, held stop-work meetings for the right to hold stop-work meetings and at them resolutions had been carried calling for the wage adjustment. Cabinet was adamant that stop-work meetings could be held only if Cabinet approved. This could only mean no such meetings would be allowed.

Discontent among workers throughout the State was at a very high level. Seamen had struck work against a further wage reduction of £1 ($2) per month which meant that their wage had now been reduced to £5 ($10) below that paid during the war years. The miners at Mount Morgan were on strike too against a wage reduction authorized by the Arbitration Court. Later, when the railwaymen went on strike, they were to be locked out by their employers. That the Mount Morgan Mining Company for many years following 1886 had paid extravagant dividends was of no consideration when it came to the question of who was to bear the burden in the lean years of the mining industry. In 1889 the Company paid a divident of 110 per cent, and for succeeding years it remained high.

On 17 January 1925 Ted Theodore took time out to turn the first sod for commencing the construction of Queensland's section of the Interstate uniform 4 ft. 8½ ins. (1.42 m) gauge line from South Brisbane to Richmond Gap, a distance of sixty-eight miles (109 km). The section was not completed until 1930, and the South Brisbane-Kyogle link was officially opened on 27 September of that year.

At the sod-turning ceremony, Theodore spoke at length of a suggested railway to run from Derby, Western Australia, across to Camooweal in north-western Queensland. The line was to connect with the railway running south from Darwin. Theodore hoped to have the co-operation of the Federal and West Australian Governments in the project, (this was a new version of a line to run from Queensland west to Western Australia, visualized shortly after railway building began in Queensland). He also outlined plans for branch lines to run from

Camooweal to ports to be developed on the Gulf of Carpentaria, and for extending existing railway lines in western Queensland. Ted then produced his *piece de resistance,* pleasing to north Queenslanders. He spoke of the feasibility of north Queensland becoming a separate state, with a provincial government for the first five years. The new state was to be launched with a £20 m. ($40 m.) loan from the Federal Government.

There were the very best of reasons for this prediction of a grand future for north Queensland being brought before the public by Theodore at that opportune time. He was about to leave State politics and make a bid for a Federal seat, and this served nicely as a vote-catching policy speech. The next month, February 1925, he resigned and in November that year stood for the seat of Herbert in the Federal elections. He was defeated by Dr. L. W. Nott, but later entered Federal Parliament by winning the New South Wales seat of Dalley.

It was the unfortunate W. N. Gillies who was sworn in as Queensland Premier on 26 February 1925. He had to tackle the gummed up position left by Ted Theodore. Unfortunately his Caninet was of little help.

Things continued drifting from bad to worse for the Gillies Government, particularly in the Railway Service and by August 1925 the entire State railways were completely immobilized by a rail strike.

On 19 August 1925 the railway unions' pay claim was heard by Mr. Justice Webb. It was stoutly opposed by the Commissioner's representative and the request for the restoration of the salary and wage cuts was refused. When it was pointed out by the unions how the Government, some time before, had restored the reductions in other public services Mr. Justice Webb said that this was no justification for a general increase. The union representatives came away from the Court with nothing.

The day following the Court's decision, the boilermakers at the Ipswich Railway Workshops held a stop-work meeting outside the workshop gates. They were locked out for the remainder of the day on special instructions from the Commissioner. The immediate reaction to this was that all the workshops employees conducted stop-work meetings each day, with the commissioner – determined to make it an endurance test – locking the men out for the remainder of each day. The workshops employees, as well as seeking a return of the wage reduction, were demanding for the forty-four hour week the same weekly wage as paid when on forty-eight hours. They had been granted

the shorter working week in 1918 but the hourly rate was not shifted to provide weekly parity of payment.

Within a few days stop-work meetings of railwaymen were being held in all the important State centres, until the railwaymen in north Queensland took the bit firmly between their teeth and declared a general strike.

A meeting of delegates from twenty-two railway unions then took place in Brisbane. These delegates formed themselves into a strike committee and endorsed a State-wide stoppage. Each of the twenty-two unions had two delegates on the committee. It was indicative of the intense feeling running through the Service of elementary justice being withheld that no less than forty-four men representing so many unions, with often conflicting policies, could quickly establish a solid front against the Government.

The strike was short and sharp. It lasted eight days, and centred around the restoration of the wage and salary cuts, and the right to hold stop-work meetings. The northern men wished to include the return to a thirty-six and three-quarter hour working week for railway clerks, something they once enjoyed until their hours were extended to thirty-nine and a quarter hours. However, it was decided to leave this to be fought over another day.

The Government agreed to a settlement on the basis of the basic wage of £4 5s. ($8.50) being restored, all rates of pay to be as had operated prior to July 1922 (when the cuts were first made), and the right to hold stop-work meetings was conceded.

In an endeavour to turn criticism away from Cabinet, Premier Gillies in a letter to the press said: "Practically the same settlement could have been achieved without the loss of an hours work."

The ARU hit back at that with a statement in the *Advocate* saying: "The strike was the result of a series of stupid blunders. The Premier's usual good judgement was, apparently, ruthlessly swept aside by crass stupidity and the inordinate vanity of blundering and incompetent Ministers, particularly, the Minister for Railways."

The first train out of Tweed Heads, after the strike, ran to Brisbane with the side of the engine tender carrying the message in large letters "Workers on the World Unite – keep the Red Flag Flying". At Rockhampton there was to be seen throughout the duration of the strike a sign near the station, painted with a large brush, advising the general public "Rockhampton Mail Will Not Run – said the Workers".

There were many workers in outside industry who benefitted from the 5s. (50c) restoration to the basic wage.

The brief term as Premier for badly counselled Gillies ended before 1925 had run its course. On 22 October W. McCormack was Premier of Queensland.

Chapter Fifteen

No man has a right to scab as long as there is a pool of water deep enough to drown his body, or a rope long enough to hang his carcase with.

The Scab Jack London

Just two years after 1925, in August 1927, Queensland railwaymen once again found themselves in serious conflict with the Government. As in 1919 railwaymen refused to allow themselves to be used as pawns to weaken the solidarity of outside unionists struggling against attack, or to be forced into scabbing, one railwayman against another. On this occasion they were to go through the new experience of the railway staff being "locked out", *en masse,* by their employer, the State Labor Government, because of their adherence to union principles.

The workers in the sugar industry at South Johnstone, Innisfail, were in trouble. The sugarcane growers' Directorate had taken over control of the South Johnstone Sugar Mill. The staff, members of the Australian Workers' Union, was reduced by fifty-five, and fifty active unionists were replaced with outsiders.

Attempts to secure some redress for the ill-treated men through the Board of Trade failed. All the South Johnstone men in a ballot, conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Arbitration Act, decided to strike. They had the support of the AWU Executive. The mill continued crushing with scab labour and the strikers prepared for a show-down with the mill management. They gathered together in mass meetings and over a period of time and on two occasions, through ballots, refused to resume work unless all jobs were filled by workers employed during the previous sugar season, and all scabs removed.

It was not long before railwaymen became involved. Sugar from the mill was usually shipped through the nearby port at Mourilyna, but the waterside workers there, as soon as the dispute began, had made known their decision not to handle the sugar. The Commissioner for Railways was warned by the AWU and ARU against courting trouble by

allowing the sugar to be put on rail. He was told that railwaymen would refuse to work trains carrying the sugar and if he were wise he would assist the unions to keep the dispute confined to South Johnstone. The Commissioner trotted out what had become the trouble-seeking stock phrase, carried down from the non-Labor days, about the Commissioner being a "common carrier" who must not discriminate in the acceptance of railway freight.

Traditionally outstanding among the railway unions because of its sound working class principles, and with a State membership in 1927 of 11,000 reaching into every section of the Railway Service, the ARU was to play a prominent role among railwaymen during the South Johnstone dispute. As many trainmen were members of the ARU, and were given continual direction and encouraged by their union executive in supporting the striking sugar workers, the influence of ARU members was strong in the matter of rail transport being used to the detriment of the strikers. In juxtaposition to this clear and unequivocal stand taken by the ARU was the weak attitude adopted by the other two unions embracing trainmen, the AFULE and Guards' Association, the executives of which left to their members the individual responsibility for acting as unionists. Such a set up could only mean that leading ARU officials and active members came in for special attention from the Railway Department and Government.

Taking no notice of the warning, the Commissioner accepted sugar from the South Johnstone Mill for transport. The Innisfail Trades and Labour Council declared the sugar "black". The AWU, having close affinity with the Labor Government, still endeavoured to embarrass it as little as possible through its members' dispute at South Johnstone and asked the railwaymen to move the train load of sugar to Townsville, where it was supposed to go to the wharf for shipment south. It was known the Townsville watersiders would refuse to touch it, and thus the sugar mill management would be stalemated in trying to clear the sugar leaving railwaymen isolated beyond the dispute.

The ruse did not work. Instead of going to the Townsville wharf the load of sugar continued by rail to Brisbane, with ARU members challenging it at Bowen, Mackay and Rockhampton. The ARU members at Bowen who refused to handle the sugar were not dealt with by the Commissioner. The South Johnstone strike committee, with AWU officials present, then declared the mill black and railwaymen, backed by a decision of the Combined Railway Unions Committee, refused to handle any goods whatever to or from the mill. By this time

the mill had run out of storage space for the sugar and a forced shut down was an imminent possibility.

Then suspensions and sackings of railwaymen began. Commissioner Davidson stuck stubbornly to his role of "common carrier". Men were booked for work in connection with the blackened mill, they bailed up and refused the work. Suspension followed and then the sack. The tempo of sacking quickly mounted, as man after man was called upon. A chain reaction set in. The regular job of a man sacked was declared black by his mates and none would fill it. Even locomotives and trains were declared black as men were taken off them and sacked after refusing to shunt or haul black goods to or from the mill. In no time 150 railwaymen, in a number of different grades, had been unceremonially flung from the Railway Service.

Then came Premier McCormack jackbooting his way on to the stage, breathing hatred against railwaymen, and those of the ARU particularly. He had only just returned from overseas, and the prising of money out of hard-bargaining financiers. Pushing aside the always dapper, bow-tied Larcombe, Minister for Railways, McCormack took over control of the Railways, issuing the ultimatum that railwaymen must obey the orders of the commissioner or suffer the consequences; this of course meant scabbing. Dictatorially, and without any consultation with the Parliamentary Labor Party, he stated his intentions to sack all ARU members, and those supporting them, as from noon on 3 September 1927. In a diatribe against the ARU he left no doubt that he was out to discredit the officials and break the union. In his declaration of war he said the issue was: "Whether the A.R.U. or the Government should rule the railways." The ARU was singled out for McCormack's special attention because this was the only union whose State governing body fully endorsed the action of its northern members' refusal to scab by hauling "black" sugar.

Before the 1927 flare-up, Bill McCormack and many of his cronies found reasons for hating, if not fearing, the ARU. Its leaders – with hard-hitting State President George Rymer and Secretary Tim Moroney always well armed with facts – were to the fore and never let up in their criticism of the Parliamentary Labor Party for what they saw as serious weaknesses and failure to advance the best interests of the working class. They carried the campaign into the Queensland Central Executive of the ALP and into ALP conventions. It was only in 1926 that the ARU delegates to the ALP Convention at Southport had their credentials rejected because they refused to sign the "non-communist

pledge" on the score that it was a reactionary procedure. (The four ARU delegates were Rymer, Moroney, Ted Foley and Vic Hartley. Hartley was a railway employee. Ted Foley, an ex-railway guard was, like Rymer and Moroney, a full-time ARU official and an outstanding trade union propagandist.)

Then there was the Mungana Mining Leases and Chillagoe Smelter affair with its questionable features and in which McCormack, Theodore and a small group figured. (A Royal Commission set up by the Moore Government in 1930 to enquire into the many ramifications of this matter cleared these two.) Rymer and Moroney, with channels for gaining reliable information, had been hammering at the Mungana business to the discomfort of McCormack and others in his camp. Bill McCormack must have detested the mere mention of ARU.

The Combined Unions Committee met to consider this threat to the ARU by McCormack and decided to declare the jobs of all sacked men black and railwaymen were instructed not to sign any declaration of obedience to the Commissioner's instructions, as they were now being called upon to do.

The ARU *Advocate*, dated 21 September 1927 had this to say about the position as it then stood:

> Whilst the Dispute Committee's action had an effect in declaring the railways "black" in the event of the A.R.U. ultimatum operating, doubtless in the meantime Premier McCormack's legal advisers had called his attention to the illegality of his action in dismissing about 11,000 employees because they belonged to an "Industrial Union".
>
> Section 67. (1) of the Industrial Arbitration Acts reads:—
>
> "No employers shall refuse employment to any person or dismiss any employee from his employment, or injure him in his employment, or alter his position to his prejudice by reason merely of the fact that the employee is an officer or member of an industrial union, or of a society or other body that has applied to be registered as an industrial union or is entitled to the benefits of an industrial agreement or award.
>
> "Any person who contravenes this provision shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding fifty pounds for each person so refused employment or employee dismissed or injured in his employment; moreover, the Court shall award to any such person as last aforesaid such sum as is reasonable compensation for loss of or injury in his employment, and order that he shall, if he has been dismissed from or prejudiced in employment, be forthwith

reinstated to his former employment or grade; and every such order shall be obeyed."

Had McCormack's ultimatium been given effect to he would have been liable to a fine of fifty pounds [$100] for each employee so dismissed. To quote the words of State President Rymer in his address at Ipswich "fifty pounds [$100] per head for 11,000 members of the A.R.U. was too high a price to pay with economy the watch-word in Government circles, so far as the toilers are concerned."

Forced into a change of mind regarding the isolation of the ARU and its members, but still determined to bully railwaymen into a disciplined and servile mass of strike-breakers, McCormack blundered into the decision that brought him into collision with the whole State population. On 3 September 1927 he closed down the Railways, and all railwaymen were not only locked out but were given notice that they were sacked from that date. He offered them the opportunity to return to their jobs – by submitting applications for re-employment "with a signed promise to obey the Commissioner's instruction", meaning scab.

This action by McCormack brought the whole Trade Union Movement in the State rallying to the support of railwaymen. The Transport Unions immediately began meeting to consider ways of assisting. Trades and Labour Councils throughout the State ranged up behind the railwaymen, and so did the union movement in the south. The Government was condemned and attacked by all the important unions. Some politicians spoke out in support of the lockedout men. The press agreed they had been badly used.

Shortly after the lockout commenced, at noon on Saturday, 3 September the Commissioner boasted of having enough men signed up for re-employment to start a skeleton service the following Tuesday. But it was an empty boast. The aged, dirty tactic intended to scare men back to work. It backfired immediately: backfired to the extent that the now enlarged Dispute Committee put a complete "black" ban on the Railways. Not a train ran until the general resumption took place, and on conditions considered acceptable by the Committee. The only railways unions not represented on the Dispute Committee were the Railway Officers' Union and the Australian Clerical Association; they refused to be bound by decisions of the Committee. Representatives of the Waterside Workers' Union, AMIEU, Federated Engine Drivers and Coal Miners' Union joined the Committee. A declaration was issued, supported by individual decisions of the AWU and AEU, that no settlement of the dispute would be accepted unless it provided for the

reinstatement of all railwaymen without loss of standing or privileges.

The Government used the press and 4QG Radio to try to persuade and then stampede railwaymen back, without result. Tim Moroney requested time on 4QG to reply to a virulent attack by McCormack. His request was turned down and an approach to the Director of 4QG for an opportunity to put the unions' case was rejected, after the Director had consulted with the Minister. The ARU questioned the Government's right to use the 4QG for biassed propaganda purposes. This brought action by the Federal Government and a curb was put on the State Government's abuse of such licence.

The degree to which swashbuckling McCormack dominated the ALP was clearly demonstrated. The QCE, State governing body of the ALP, met but failed to deal with McCormack. The Labor Party met with the same result. The Parliamentary Labor Party met, with a full Caucus, and did nothing in the way of repudiating the Cabinet. Thirteen Labor Party politicians redeemed themselves in Parliament with a show of opposition to McCormack's ultimatum, to which Cabinet had given endorsement. There were but two Labor men in Parliament, Collins and Hartley, who had the courage to oppose the Premier's action from the beginning. The Executive of the QCE refused to call the QCE together once more to consider the attitude being adopted by McCormack. The Caucus met again and a no-confidence motion moved against McCormack was defeated thirty-eight to four.

In the interest of complete authenticity the following account of events leading up to the lifting of the lockout is taken from the pages of the ARU *Advocate* dated 21 September 1927 (eleven days after the resumption of work by railwaymen).

> The A.F.U.L.E. and Guards Association, whose representatives stated they had no quarrel with the Government, early proceeded to sabotage the solidarity of the rank and file. Their members were kept aloof from mass meetings and were encouraged to consider the possibility of an early resumption, upon any terms. The weakness of these sectional unions produced a division on the committee in the middle of the week, which endangered the prosecution of the dispute to success on all issues.
>
> The Arbitration Court offered final terms for the settlement of the South Johnstone dispute. These were referred to the South Johnstone workers, and after they had rejected them, were rejected on the Dispute Committee, on an even vote.
>
> The Court then issued an order giving the A.W.U. 24 hours to accept these terms or face deregistration, cancellation of the

Award and loss of preference. The Dispute Committee referred the order to the A.W.U. Executive for a recommendation. The A.W.U. accepted the order on condition that all railwaymen were reinstated without victimisation, and the Committee endorsed their decision. McCormack insisted on an undertaking that railwaymen would obey the Commissioner's orders.

Kissick, President of the A.F.U.L.E., who had been in touch with McCormack throughout the lock-out, then broke the solidarity of the Committee and threatened to endanger a combined settlement, by asserting that he would order his men back to work unless there was an immediate settlement (Messrs. Kissick and Moss represented the A.F.U.L.E. on the Dispute Committee. From the very outset their support was of doubtful quality. This suspicion was later justified when Messrs. Moroney and McHugh secretly followed them to Premier McCormack's office, after an important meeting of the Committee, at which the delegates where pledged to secrecy. When challenged later, Kissick admitted that this interview was not the first since the Committee had been in session. The manner in which Premier McCormack kept the Caucus and Q.C.E. at bay conclusively showed that his informers did their work well).

Faced with this defection of Kissick, and other sectional unions, the A.R.U. and other militant delegates accepted a settlement which preserved the A.R.U. from isolation, and the lock-out was declared off at midnight on September 10.

Results – The South Johnstone workers were ordered back to work with scabs because the A.W.U. was not prepared to face deregistration upon this issue, in view of its previous endorsement of these terms; and in view of the attitude of the A.F.U.L.E. officials. All railwaymen were reinstated without victimisation, or loss of status. McCormack's attack on the A.R.U. completely failed. He did not compel railwaymen to move black sugar. He could not resume a train service until the black sugar was eliminated from the issue. He obtained no guarantee that railwaymen would handle black goods in future.

Railwaymen were compelled to sign the document by the weakness of the A.F.U.L.E., and other officials. They signed this document with a guarantee of employment as unionists, only under instructions from their union when the obligation to scab had been removed. They reserved the right to behave as unionists in the future.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A little bit of sugar
And a little bit of tea,
A little bit of flour you can hardly see,
And without any meat, between you and me
It's a bugger of a life, by Jesus.

Anon

The McCormack Government completed the disillusionment of the masses as to a Labor Government filling the role of political Santa Claus. From 1915 Labor had continually held the reins of government in Queensland, and whilst some worthwhile reforms had ensued the need for consistent struggle by the trade unions had in no way lessened. For the socialists it was early evident that socialism for Labor politicians was a mere figure of speech.

By 1929 the Great Depression had begun spawning its tragedy wholesale. A black pall of unemployment spread. Even the strongest trade unions were in no state to beat back the fierce attacks being made on wages and conditions. Queensland workers held in disgust hamfisted McCormack and his minions.

On 21 May 1929, riding the rebound from Labor found wanting, A. E. Moore and his party came to govern Queensland. The affairs of State were back in the hands of the Tories. Minister for Railways was Godfrey Morgan. One other notable event in 1929 was the completion of the new fifty-four mile (87 km) railway from Duchess to Mount Isa. Duchess is 603 miles (907 km) out from Townsville. This was the last major railway construction project undertaken in Queensland until after World War II.

The Moore Government immediately put their plans for combatting the Depression, and to "give the boy a chance", as pledged on the election hustings, into effect. The Salaries Act was pushed through. Under it deductions from wages and salaries of nine, eleven and fifteen per cent, or more, were compulsory depending upon the size of the pay

packet. Calculating one's take home pay became an involved mathematical exercise.

All metalliferous miners, except at Mount Isa, were removed from the jurisdiction of the Arbitration Court leaving them to bargain with mine owners on the questions of wages and working conditions. With unemployment rampant, miners had little bargaining strength. How circumstances alter cases! Now, when workers through long and bitter experiences have brought their unions to great and lasting strength, private agreements between workers and employers is a crime against society in the eyes of a Tory government. Railwaymen were also refused access to the Arbitration Court. The Moore Government put the clock back to pre-1917 days and pay rates with all conditions of employment for Queensland railwaymen were set out in Staff Regulations (By-Law No. 255). With the exception of the workshops and maintenance branches, where the forty-four hour week remained, the forty-eight hour week was in operation.

Railwaymen struggled along on short time. In 1930 the basic wage was dropped to £3 17s. ($7.70) per week and in 1931 it had fallen to £3 14s. ($7.40). The Premier promised a minimum weekly wage of not less than £3 ($6) would be paid, a promise not kept. Many regularly took home much less. Train crews found themselves never working more than three days one week and two the next. A fireman was lucky if he could hand his wife £4 ($8) to keep house on for a fortnight. Often it was less. All paid Unemployment Relief Tax of 2s. (20c) per week. Life insurance policies were surrendered and insurance companies showed profit on the transactions. Men paying off homes lost through default.

Those who "gave the boy a chance" were trainmen who, at risk of severe penalty, shut their eyes to the train jumpers who, unable to obtain the miserably paid unemployed intermittent relief work, wandered the State receiving relief rations, forbidden to draw them twice at the same centre. At times trainmen shielded "the boys" from searching police and went to some trouble in helping them get aboard and then safely away at the end of the journey.

And then, in 1931, northern railwaymen became entangled once more, per force, in someone else's troubles.

It all began in a modest way among a small community of miners on the Mount Oxide copper field, north of Cloncurry. Employed at the few small mines then operating, weekly earnings were not much more than the basic wage. For them mining was not as rewarding as could be

expected on a field of copper so rich that one mine could claim to be "The Mighty Atom" and another "The Little Wonder". Home for the miners was a tent under a bough shed, or a room constructed out of beaten-out kerosene tins, sun-blasted where it stood on a spinifex dotted stoney ridge. The moisture-starved stunted trees spread thinly around seemingly apologetic for the lousy shade thrown.

Immediately the determination of the miners wages was removed from the jurisdiction of the Court the mine owners at Mount Oxide set the weekly pay at £4 2s. 6d. ($8.25). The ruling basic wages at the time was £4 11s. ($9.10) for the Cloncurry District; for Townsville it was £4 4s. ($8.40). The miners were obliged to purchase their supplies at the mine store and were paying 3s. 7d. (36c) per pound for butter, tea 3s. (30c), sugar 7d. (6c), bacon 2s. (20c) per pound, Nestle's milk 1s. 3d. (12c) a tin, onions 4d. (3c) per pound, flour 14s. 6d. ($1.45) for fifty pounds, kerosene soap 1s. 8d. (17c) a bar. Other commodities were priced at a similar level. Meat would be brought by train once a week.

The reduced wage was not meekly accepted by the miners who were members of the AWU. Their protests went unheeded so they withdrew their labour. With the assistance of a few prospectors turned scabs, the mine owners succeeded in getting a rail wagon loaded with copper ore for despatch from Dobbyn, the rail head. Because the Cloncurry district had no smelter (Mount Isa was only being established), the ore travelled the long journey first to Townsville and then north to the Chillagoe smelter for treatment.

The strikers endeavoured to have the scabs desist in their work. A small brawl broke out and a policeman brandished a revolver. He was quickly disarmed and not a shot was fired. As a representative of the men said after, this was due to the restraint shown by the strikers, eleven of whom were arrested.

The miners sought the assistance of the railway unions. Railwaymen were slow to act because of the age old problem of bringing about common action by the several unions with trainmen membership. The wagon had left Dobbyn and was heading for Townsville on a train when the ARU at a well-attended meeting in Townsville decided the wagon of ore was "black" and would not be moved by rail any further than Townsville. The officials of the Guards and Shunters' Union and the AFULE refused to co-operate.

On the arrival of the offending wagon at the Townsville shunting yard the shunting staff let it be known that, other than putting it aside

in an out of the way siding, they would have nothing to do with it. The crucial move was then made by the Railway General Manager, Arthur Crowther. (When newly arrived to fill the position, he addressed a lunch hour meeting of Townsville railwaymen as "fellow workers".) Crowther moved into the dispute by sacking three leading members of the ARU – Harry Wood (a high ranking railway clerk and at the time Acting Northern District Secretary of the ARU whilst Secretary Jim Murison was away from Townsville handling members' cases before the Railway Appeal Board), Ernie O'Brien, (foreman shunter and Chairman of the Townsville branch of the ARU) and Harry Sparrow, (driver and also an honorary official of the union). They were accused of entering the shunting yard after the meeting and, the General Manager claimed, "prevented the shunters from carrying out their work". Crowther also said that they "were not the only ones but were the ring leaders." It was proved to the General Manager that the alleged ring leaders did not go to the shunting yard as he believed, and in any case the shunters had early made their own decision to refuse to handle the wagon of Mount Oxide ore.

Crowther would listen to none of this and so to the issue of assisting the copper miners was added the further one of railwaymen protecting their three sacked workmates. A boycott was placed on the work usually performed by Wood, O'Brien and Sparrow and men called on to replace them refused the work and were therefore suspended. Others received the same treatment for refusing to handle the troublesome wagon of ore. One shift in the signal cabin controlling the shunting movements in the shunting yard was declared "black" when a signalman was suspended after he refused to operate interlocking levers to allow the wagon of ore to be shunted from one siding to another. A chain reaction set in, rapidly running through the ranks of railwaymen. As men were refusing to step into the shoes of those dismissed, and thus received the same treatment, the Railway Service in Townsville soon reached a state of chaos. Other depots in the north were affected. As the officials of the two sectional unions advised their members to work as instructed by the Department this confounded the position even more. (Despite their officials' stand, some members of these unions joined issue with the ARU and received their marching orders from the General Manager.)

Certain trains became "black" because, according to the roster system, the enginemen who should have worked them had been suspended. At one stage three trains were standing nose to nose, the

three engines almost touching each other, near the Townsville station. They stood that way until shunters loyal to the Department, or similarly inspired enginemen, could be brought to untangle them. One train arriving from Charters Towers was stranded outside Townsville at the home signal. It could not advance any further because there was no one in the signal cabin to work the signal as it was the period during which the cabin was "black". The train crew were members of the AFULE and Guards and Shunters' Union. Eventually, by arrangement with the General Manager's office, the driver and fireman threw the fire out of the loco and they and the guard went to their homes, leaving the train where it stood. The train staff went home with the driver in his tucker box.

Such a state of affairs could have only one ending. A general strike was declared throughout the north. To the issues of the non-handling of the wagon of ore and reinstatement of dismissed railwaymen was added a third – the return of wages and conditions lost over the previous three years.

Members of the sectional unions continued working a skeleton service throughout the north with the strikers resentment reaching a high pitch. Picketing was instituted and slowly the scabbing AFULE and Guards and Shunters' Union men were being shamed into joining the strikers. By day a large crowd of strikers and their womenfolk, joined by many sumpathetic outsiders, lined the railway fence near the Townsville station jeering and booing as a train arrived. During the night picketing covered the two main entrances to the railway. It was always said that one fireman who promised to return home after waylaid by pickets on his way to work, but got to the job undetected by the picket line, must have swum the shark-infested Ross River. How else he could have beaten the picket line was never fathomed.

The much abused wagon of copper ore was moved out of Townsville. It was taken north on a train with two Locomotive Inspectors acting as driver and fireman. It never reached its destination during the strike however. Somewhere along the journey the wagon had to be abandoned because of its hostile reception at every station.

From Bowen in the south to Cairns in the north, and west to Cloncurry the determination of the strikers to continue was firming. The feeling grew – and was expressed at the regularly-held mass meetings, particularly in the chief centre of Townsville – that their position was strengthening. There was an underlying sense of pride to be detected in that, after passing through a long period of gradual

impoverishment and working short time on reduced wages, with debts to tradesman continually mounting (striking on an empty gut became a saying), surrounded by unemployment at an astronomical level, sufficient strength had been infused into a stand – on issues considered just – against the Railway Department and Government, so as to bring the Railway Service in the north to an ultimate standstill.

Support from the south and central divisions was looked for and expected, but there was treachery at work. The AFULE journal *Headlight* had run a statement throwing doubt on the Mount Oxide miners being members of the AWU or, in fact, unionists at all. At a meeting of railwaymen held at Roma Street to discuss the strike in the north, J. Valentine, State Secretary of the AFULE, said that a leading official of the AWU (Riordan) had told Valentine it was not known what union the miners belonged to "and no evidence could be got of their union membership, if any." This meeting was held on 14 November 1931 and it was recorded in the Brisbane ARU office that this same Riordan had telephoned ARU Secretary Moroney two weeks before, on 29 October, seeking the assistance of railwaymen on behalf of the Mount Oxide miners "in trouble with the police". It was also a fact that on 25 November C. Fallon, a State official of the AWU, sought the aid of railwaymen for the miners.

By the time AWU officialdom was forced to admit that the miners were union members, the damage to the miners' cause had been done, with the falsification of the whole affair spreading throughout the south and central areas. With the AWU showing no inclination to move on behalf of the miners, plus the non-participation attitude of the sectional unions, the northern men were going it alone, with ARU members becoming dangerously isolated and bearing the brunt.

The AWU cold-bloodedly, to all intents and purposes, renounced responsibility as the union covering the men around whom the industrial trouble had begun. The concern of the officials for the sore-pressed Mount Oxide men, and the railwaymen who had come to their assistance, went no further than a statement to the effect that if a Labor government was returned in the approaching State election all railwaymen would get their jobs back – a typical attitude to all workers' problem by the AWU which at this time was the backbone of the Parliamentary Labor Party.

The northern men realized the necessity of calling the strike off, although the elections were not due until May 1932. When the strikers offered for work 167 of them were refused reinstatement, among

whom were Wood, O'Brien and Sparrow. A departmental "black list" had been prepared early, and thereby hangs an amusing tale.

An official copy of the list of names of those not to be re-employed was in the possession of the ARU not long after it was drawn up, as the result of a quick thinking ARU secretary. The list was supposed to be a secret document, now called "classified, however ARU northern district secretary Jim Murison, on the occasion of one of his frequent visits to the railway General Manager's office in connection with matters of union concern, called on the chief staff clerk. During the interview the clerk found it necessary to bring a file of papers from an adjoining room. During the brief period of his absence Murison's eyes were caught by the word "Strikers" on a file. A quick peep inside revealed a list of names. Two rapid twists of the wrist and the list was in Jim's coat pocket. The interview over, no time was lost getting back to the union office for an examination of the now much crumpled document.

As suspected, it was a list of railwaymen considered by the General Manager and his advisers to have been ring leaders in the strike. As well as giving concern it was good for a few laughs as the compilers of the list were way out in some of their judgments. Shown as prominent striker with the appendage "poor worker" was one who, when on his job as coal-man moving about on top of the high coal stage unloading coal from wagons into the coal bins, actually performed the work of two men. When on holidays his relief complained of the work being too strenuous and was given an assistant. Coal man Jimmy Morrell – built like a bear and as strong, full of good humour – although a staunch unionist was no more prominent than the average striker despite his saying, in rare moments of despondency, that the workers as a whole were a lot of bone heads "and the only way to educate them is with a pick handle."

Several who were named could have felt maligned by being included. Although they stopped work their mates knew they had little heart for the strike. Others most outspoken in favour of the strike continuing were overlooked and luckily escaped the blackening brush of the General Manager.

To have the black list was one thing but to keep it securely hidden, in case the police were put to searching for it, was another matter. In the beginning only three or four leading union members were aware of the list having been purloined. One came up with the astounding suggestion "give it to a copper to hold until things cool

off". In Townsville, those days anyhow, practically every member of the Police Force was known to railwaymen. Some had policemen relatives who, as far as they dared, showed sympathy in the railwaymen's trouble, particularly when given the duty of moving on the pickets. Within hours of the damning list being taken from the railway office it was tucked away in the ceiling of a married policeman's cottage. Having knowledge of the comments set out in it, and some being all at sea as to accuracy, helped the union get more railwaymen back on the job sooner than might otherwise have been possible.

The Railway Service in the north returned to normalcy. The large number of railwaymen refused re-employment knuckled down to securing an existence in whatever manner possible pending the election of a Labor government – an event far from certain although it was widely felt that, after experiencing the ineptitude of the Moore Government for three years, any change could only be for the better.

Two railway clerks hawked fish around town in a coffin like box fitted to an old motor bike owned by one of them. A fireman used his persuasive eloquenace to secure orders for an upholstering firm. Ernie O'Brien and the author, who had a friend growing pineapples on Magnetic Island, went calling "Pineapples! four for a bob!" The first day's effort resulted in a net profit of 2s. 9d. (28c) each. A few found work out at Mount Isa, underground. Mount Isa then was really a frontier town and did not attract labour as it does now with air conditioned homes and other aids to ease the harshness of life in a hot and arid region. One enterprising engineman became a door to door salesman of cheap jewellery, an arch optimist at a time when few people had money for other than necessities. Many railwaymen cast into the industrial wilderness had no recourse but to struggle along on intermittent relief work.

The most unusual railway relaying gang was set up. One of the few relaying jobs Government loan money could run to was about to commence between Pentland and Torrens Creek with the gang's camp established at Burra, an isolated little railway siding 170 miles (274 km) west of Townsville. The fallen from grace railwaymen were given the opportunity of applying for inclusion in the gang. The result, a gang of forty-nine men, twenty-two being regular employees on relaying work and the rest new chums – representative of almost every grade in the Service – drivers, firemen, cleaners, guards, signalmen, checkers, shunters, porters, clerks, name him and he probably was there.

It was tent life with tents pitched in rows and the standard railway galley for the cook thrown together with sheets of galvanized iron, open one side. Harry Sparrow was cook, elected by popular vote, by virtue of his reputation as a good cook among enginemen camped away from home in railway quarters. The cook's assistant was Henry (Bluey) Dinsmore, a clerk for years and now paying the penalty for being the outspoken and capable Secretary of the Strike Committee. He was to confound all his critics in after years by rising through the Railway Service to ultimately occupy the blue ribbon position of Railway General Manager, Brisbane, a nudge away from the commissionership.

Due to trade union training, the affairs of the camp were under the management of a committee elected at a meeting of the entire gang; such meetings being held regularly for reports, discussions, suggestions and criticisms. Committee Secretary was Oli Taylor, another clerk who, until the axe fell, was filling a high position in the Townsville railways good office, but his regularity on the picket line was displeasing to the General Manager.

To feed the gang the camp committee purchased three sheep each week, locally. Beef, and other supplies, came on order from Townsville. The relaying work carried on for more than six months and as nothing to the contrary was ever heard must have given every satisfaction. It was a gang of good humoured men. Amusing incidents in camp helped relieve the months in isolation.

At one meeting there was some discussion on the menu for afternoon meals. A speaker in a complaining tone said he saw no reason why the cook should not one day make soup with the sheep heads. "I move accordingly" said he. Quick as a flash another jumped to his feet saying "Mr. Chairman! I move an amendment that the eyes be put in the soup to see us through the week."

There was the hefty one-time engine drive who, on going to his tent at bedtime, found hidden beneath the bed clothes a sleeping mate. It was the "Jim Crow", used for bending rails. The main feature of the prank was that the heavy steel contraption called for the combined efforts of two men to move it about.

Several kinds of jam, and one or two tins of marmalade, were always on the dining table. One diner was always early and saw to it that the tin of marmalade was alongside his plate. One of the boys defeated him by getting to the table very early one day and removing the labels from all the tins.

In the galley three boilers of water were kept simmering, two for

baths, the other for cooking purposes. Young George raced to be in the bath first and hurried to get his hot water – one dipper full to a kerosene tin of cold, to be poured into the contraption known as an Indian bath; raised, when ready, to the desired height by rope and pulley with the water released on to the bather by the manipulation of another rope or wire. Under went the naked body of George to be showered with greasy corn beef water. Blind haste at the galley was his undoing.

Election time arrived. Labor came in to govern, with W. Forgan Smith as Premier from 16 June 1932. Minister for Railways was J. Dash. All the pariahs were allowed to resume their lost railway status. But no millennium was ushered in. Depressed wages and conditions remained, to be improved slightly, but slowly, in succeeding years only by unceasing union agitation, and interminably argued claims brought before the Arbitration Court, to which railwaymen were again allowed access.

The Labor Party had re-established its credits as being better fitted than opposing parties to administer the Queensland State for capitalism, and to the satisfaction of the employing class. Labor continued to govern uninterrupted for twenty-five years until, in 1957, the devastating schism burst the Queensland ALP assunder and Vince Gair, the last of the emancipated Queensland Labor premiers, broke with the Australian Labor Party to form the Queensland Labor Party, prior to joining up with the Democratic Labor Party.

A warning – for those who wished to see – of the cataclysm rushing upon the Queensland ALP was clearly given in 1948.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Out of the hell of the workshops he manned,
Grimly, in multitudes vast growing vaster,
Into the Main Street came the new Master
Came – and everything changed in the land.

Demyan Bedny

From 1942 until 1952 Queensland was under the premiership of two men who once filled important positions in what was to become the Queensland Branch of the ARU. On 16 September 1942 the premiership passed to Frank Cooper who had been General Secretary of the Queensland Railways Union in 1916–17.

Frank Cooper was Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party during those years of great stress when Queensland was so close to the combat area of the South Pacific in World War II. During the war years Queensland railwaymen maintained a crucial service in a manner so commendable as to earn unstinted praise throughout the nation, from overseas, and from the highest in command of the Allied Forces.

With air and military bases established in many corners of the State, a number jammed into out of the way places in north Queensland, railwaymen worked health-damagingly long shifts to provide the transport for a country at war. When the war ended, and whilst still giving of their best in keeping the State adequately served by a seriously run-down railway, the same railwaymen, remembering the promises of rewards to come that had been shouted from the heights during the war, turned their thoughts again to matters willingly put aside when called upon to help in the fight against Fascism – reasonable wage standards and job conditions. They were not unaware of the huge profits they, by their labour, had earned for the Queensland Railway Department during the war. In 1942–43 railway revenue climbed to an amazing £17,148,000 ($34,296,000), to provide a surplus of over £4.5 million ($9 million), representing an increase of more than 250 per cent in railway business over three years.

Amiable Frank Cooper held the Queensland premiership until 1946 and if he did not strike any Homeric blow for liberty, equality and fraternity, his attitude was benevolent to those so striving. Of course, for most of his term, the State was virtually in the hands of Allied Command. He had as Minister for Railways J. Larcombe (Bill McCormack's henchman in the 1925 and 1927 railway troubles) until 1944, and then E. J. Walsh. A further handicap, and not the least, was his Commissioner for Railways, P. R. T. Wills – anti-labour and anti-trade union.

Then, on 7 March 1946, with Labor still governing, E. M. (Ned) Hanlon became Premier. As a young railwayman, Ned had received distinction in the labour movement as chairman of the QUREA strike committee of 1912, when the police, with batons and swords, charged upon peaceful citizens of Brisbane.

In 1948, Ned Hanlon turned the clock back thirty-six years in dealing with strikers and peaceful citizens.

It was a strike by Queensland railwaymen that showed to the world a Government's tyranny and contempt for the first principles of the labour movement, principles which Hanlon had endorsed in his rise to political power.

The wage margins above the basic wage of Queensland workers in most instances were well below those of similar workers in southern States. From the end of the war, Queensland railwaymen, along with the rest of the trade union movement in the State, had endeavoured to achieve wage rates approaching parity with those paid in the south. Continual opposition was met from both Government and employers. That Queensland was the low wage state of the Commonwealth became so obvious that the trade unions in the south saw it as a menace to the standards of their members. This was born out in a letter to the Queensland Trade and Labor Council from the Secretary of the South Australian Trades and Labor Council which read: "You already appreciate that when one is negotiating with a Tory Government who can point with delight to the low wages paid in a State governed by Labor the task becomes very onerous, and leaves one rather disgusted. While such wages exist in one State the employers elsewhere take advantage of them."

Early in 1947 the Mooney Award granted workers in the metal industry under Federal awards increases of 16s. ($1.60), 13s. ($1.30) and 11s. ($1.10) per week for respective groups of employees. These increases were accepted by Arbitration tribunals throughout the

southern states and flowed on to all employees, including railwaymen. Those under a Federal award in Queensland received the increases.

Moves were made for a flow on of the increases to Queensland railwaymen. On 18 September 1947 claims were lodged with the State Arbitration Court on behalf of tradesmen, and claims for comparable marginal increases to be awarded other workshops' employees were lodged on 11 November 1947. Earlier in the same year, on 17 April, the Queensland rail unions had submitted claims to the Court for week-end penalty rates, then being paid railwaymen in the south. The Christmas season arrived with none of the claims heard, and the Court took a holiday for two months, extending into February 1948.

Late in 1947 the unions approached the Queensland Labor Government seeking some agreement on the marginal increases. This resulted in offers being set out in letters from the Premier and the Minister for Transport. The Minister offered 6s. 10d. (69c) per week for a tradesmen only. The Premier went a little further, adding an increase of a few shillings, only for workers closely related to fitters in the work performed. This left a large number of railway workers with no increase whatever.

A meeting of All Services Rail Unions on 12 December 1947 decided to recommend to all unions with members in the Railway Service that these offers be rejected and, failing a satisfactory decision from the Government before 31 January, all railway workshops and running sheds employees to stop work on a demand for the full rates in accordance with the Mooney Award. The demand was also to include the payment of week-end penalty rates to all railwaymen.

Members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union held a stop-work meeting on 27 January 1948 and decided the union should conduct a State-wide secret ballot of its members on the strike issue.

Secret and open ballots on the question were conducted by several other railway unions with members effected by the projected stoppage. In every case strike action was favoured by a large majority. In the case of the AEU it was a ten to one majority.

At a meeting of representatives from the Federal Rail Unions on 28 January, it was unanimously decided to call for the strike to commence from midnight on 2 February 1948. The small sectional unions, such as the Maintenance Union, Traffic Union, Guards and Shunters, Signalmen, Station Masters and Night Officers, remained loyal to the Government and Commissioner, taking no official part in what was to become a long drawn-out dispute, and were at no time

parties to the recurring negotiations between the unions and the Government, that arose in the course of the nine weeks strike and negotiations that finally led to a settlement. However, as the resolve of the strikers hardened, and the strike burst from its original confined areas, many members of these unions joined the strikers.

As mass meetings of railwaymen and ballots favouring strike were taking place throughout Queensland, the Railway Commissioner sought Arbitration Court assistance. Members of the Court broke their holiday, doubtless in a far from happy state of mind, and a compulsory conference was called on 2 February with the strike pending from midnight. A proper attempt to mediate by the Court, or by an independent party, at this stage may have been effective. The conference was abortive. The Court seemed more concerned with advertising its disciplinary power and issuing threats against the trade unions than the all-important matter of conciliation. The Government, in the grip of Hanlon, had hitched itself to the fatuous belief that to relent even a fraction was unbecoming weakness. Spokesmen, with Premier Hanlon loudest, mouthed inflammatory accusations which were avidly picked up by the press, of communists dominating the unions and misleading railwaymen. The union delegates left the Court with the conviction that the strike must proceed. They did, however, make one last attempt at negotiating a settlement of the dispute. A call was made that afternoon on the Minister for Transport, J. E. Duggan (he had taken over the portfolio from E. J. Walsh in 1947). He could only advise that the Government's offer of no more than 6s. 10d. (69c) for tradesmen and a shilling or two for some other rail workers would not be altered.

The strike commenced at one minute past midnight on Tuesday 3 February 1948, an historic day. The resolution calling the strike, and telegrammed urgently to main centres of the State, read:

> That this meeting of the Disputes Committee expresses resentment at the attitude of the Arbitration Court today in our dispute with the Commissioner for Railways on our claim for Marginal increases, and week-end penalty rates.
>
> We declare that the threats used by the Court are at variance with the spirit of Conciliation and consequently they will not deter us from proceeding to establish for our members the same marginal increases and Week-end Penalty rates as are enjoyed by railwaymen in the Southern States.
>
> We regret that the Minister for Transport, in our interview with him today, did not approach the dispute in a more conciliatory manner, and deprecate his attitude that, despite the justice of the

claims of railwaymen, and the inconvenience that will be caused the users of the railways, the Government will uphold the policy of refusing to settle our claims in the same way as other Tribunals and Governments have settled similar claims for our unions in other States.

We therefore reaffirm our previous decision to cease work as from 12.1 a.m. on Tuesday, February 3.

Carried Unanimously.

And thus the strike of Queensland railwaymen which was to develop into the most extensive and bitter in the history of the Queensland Labor movement was declared.

The composition of the Committee responsible for the decision, so serious in its implications, was significant in that it embraced all the major unions operating in the Railway Service: Australian Railways Union; Amalgamated Engineering Union; Blacksmiths' Society; Boilermakers' Society; Building Workers' Industrial Union; Electrical Trades' Union; Federated Ironworkers' Association; Moulders' Union; Vehicle Builders' Federation; Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen. To provide as broad a democratic base as possible to the body holding the power to make such a decision, a representative from the Ipswich Railway Workshops Shop and Job Committee was present.

From the beginning to the very end of the dispute every resolution coming from the Central Disputes Committee had been hammered out on the anvil of unity, often with long debate, until it had taken such shape as to be unanimously acceptable by the Committee.

Premier Hanlon and the press at all times endeavoured, by the use of "Red" bogey clamourings, to draw the support of railwaymen away from the Disputes Committee claiming (and Hanlon should have known better than the press how wrong the claim was) that the Committee was dominated by ill-minded communists, misleading the workers and bent on destroying "stable Government". Communists on this and other committees that came into existence during the strike were a small minority. Hanlon was aware that the great majority of men on committees, and especially the Central Committee, were either members of the Labor Party or supporters of that Party.

At the outset of the dispute the Premier adopted an obdurate stand, which he maintained. Taking up the strong man role he spoke of "honouring pledges" and "oath of office". Standing over the Parliamentary Labor Party, egged on by the Tory Opposition, Hanlon

evidently believed the strike could be only a short-lived affair. As one week led to another with the strike solidifying and attracting support from outside unions and the general public, he was to find he had grasped the tail of a tiger and, as events proved, became a victim of pique which quickly turned to raging hatred directed against the unions and their leaders who dared to defy him.

The railway unions early claimed that; "Queensland had a low wage policy, administered by the Government and Arbitration Court, to attract overseas and Southern capital to Queensland and to provide high profits for local capitalists, such a policy demanding a subservient working class." To prove this, union pamphlets carried figures showing that Queensland workers generally averaged £1 10s. ($3) per week less in wages than their counterparts in New South Wales and Victoria. In some categories the difference was shown to be as high as £3 ($6) per week.

Within twenty-four hours of the strike declaration drastic cuts in train services had been necessary. On 4 February the Railway Commissioner sought permission from the Arbitration Court to stand down railway employees he considered could not be gainfully employed. (The Commissioner had stood down thousands of workers before permission was given by the Court.) The Court gave its permission. At the hearing of the Commissioner's application Mick O'Brien, Chairman of the Disputes Committee, was refused leave to address the Court in opposition to the stand-down order being granted. He attended the Court not as committee chairman but as State President of the ARU to put the case for the union members. Other union officials (all members of the Disputes Committee) succeeded in getting a hearing – C. Merrell (AEU), G. Dawson (BWIU) and F. Weigel (Moulders).

They endeavoured to impress the Court with the fact that the question of a stand-down order could best be deposed of by the claims of railwaymen in Queensland being granted as a matter of course, such claims having been awarded not only railwaymen but tramwaymen, as well as other workers in essential services, in the south. The Court refused to be impressed.

From then on events came tumbling one upon the other in quick succession. Numbers of stood-down men sought permission to join the strikers. The contention of the Disputes Committee that the stand-down was in fact a "lockout" seemed to be more or less proved. Those stood down were expected to hold themselves in readiness at all time for calls to work, which could be for only one, perhaps two, days in all.

As the strike continued the railway authorities, misled by press statements of the intended return to work of groups of strikers because the strike was "cracking", would call to work large numbers of stood-down men believing there would be employment for them with trains running, only to find the press had allowed wishful thinking to run riot and the men called in were sent home again.

The main effect of the early, impetuous, action of the Commissioner in securing the stand-down order from the Court was to boost the ranks of strikers. The second week of the strike brought the train service to a complete stoppage. Trainmen, members of both the ARU and AFULE were on strike. With the exception of maintenance gangs and a few other sections of the Service, ineffective in the strike, all railwaymen in the State had stopped either as strikers or stood-down men. Stood-down men, if members of unions engaged in the strike, were debarred from receiving social service payments by a Federal decision.

The Court and Government issued threats of punitive action against the strikers and unions, but mass meetings of railwaymen continued to be held in the many centres, carrying resolutions to continue the stoppage.

Important unions in the south began sending messages of support to the Central Disputes Committee. The Committee appointed Alex MacDonald, Secretary of the Ironworkers' Union, as its full-time secretary. The Queensland Trades and Labor Council had endorsed the stoppage and was co-operating in matters of organization and fund raising. Financial aid sought from Federal unions in the south was beginning to arrive.

Union speakers were travelling throughout the State, as far north as Cairns and west to Roma, addressing mass meetings of railwaymen. Eleven speakers were despatched interstate where Trades and Labor Councils and individual unions arranged job and public meetings. There the cause and development of the Queensland trouble was explained and appeals made for finance. Large sums of money resulting from this campaigning were soon flowing to Queensland from towns, cities, and metropolitan centres in four southern states. Typical was the £1000 ($2000) from Broken Hill forwarded within a day or two of the arrival of the Queensland speaker.

A Propaganda Committee was occupied continually at the Trades Hall issuing leaflets and posters for distribution in every corner of Queensland and interstate. These provided a running commentary on

strike developments and helped combat day to day distortions of the true position as presented in the public press. Over the period of the dispute the Central Disputes Committee authorized the production and distribution of 850,000 leaflets, 20,000 Information Bulletins, 160,000 special issues of *Advocate* while the regular fortnightly issue of *Advocate* featured large spreads of strike news.

The *Advocate* material at all times attracted praise in all states for amazing quantity, exactness in reporting, conciseness and presentation. This material came mainly from the pen of Frank Nolan, Queensland Secretary of the ARU and *Advocate* editor, with any assistance the union's State President, Mick O'Brien, might render whilst occupied almost full-time with responsibilities as Chairman of the Central Disputes Committee which met ever more frequently and for extended sessions.

A packed mass meeting in the Brisbane Trades Hall on 10 February endorsed the actions of the Disputes Committee to that date, and called on all striking ALP members to move in their respective ALP branches for the condemnation of the Government and the Court. Six of the ten unions represented on the Central Disputes Committee were affiliated to the Australian Labor Party. Many Labor Party branches subsequently condemned the Government. Among the speakers at the mass meeting on 10 February was E. J. (Ted) Rowe, an AEU Commonwealth Councillor, who explained that he had been directed to Queensland by his Council because the issue involved in the Queensland dispute was seen as of great importance to AEU members in all states, and all the necessary resources of the union would be made available to assist the strikers. From this meeting picketing increased rapidly in numbers, not only in Brisbane but in all main centres of the State.

The Railway Department found it possible to get a very restricted train service operating. The Disputes Committee imposed a "black" ban on all trains carrying coal. The ban was respected by the Waterside Workers' and Miners' Unions. The Disputes Committee, after some troublesome negotiations between it and the Commissioner, agreed to the running of special food and water trains to remote centres.

Because of the media's boycott of official statements from the Disputes Committee, information had to be sent from the strike centre to Strike Committees throughout the State by lengthy worded telegrams – in some cases up to 500 words.

On 19 February the Arbitration Court, to gain the initiative, called another conference which the Transport Workers' Union had sought as

their members were becoming affected by the stoppage. Lacking any element of conciliation, the conference was an utter failure. Court President was Mr. Justice Matthews. Other members of the Court were Messrs. Riordan and Dwyer.

Statements by Hanlon and an increasingly vicious attack by the press on the railway union leadership that was mounted on fabrication and provocative slanting of the real position, endeavoured to cloud a legitimate union grievance by inventing a "communist threat".

The Disputes Committee felt compelled to add to its forces and on 24 February all maintenance men employed at the Brisbane City Council Tramway Depot at Milton were called on to stop work as from Thursday 26 February at midnight. This was agreed to by the unions concerned – AEU, Vehicle Builders, Ironworkers, Boilermakers, Moulders, Building Workers. The next day Brisbane Lord Mayor Chandler induced the Court to issue an order forbidding these employees from striking without first taking a secret ballot. The order was completely ignored and most of the men ceased work. The Milton depot immediately came under constant picketing, with sometimes as many as 250 pickets (men and women), present, displaying a sea of signs reading "Don't Scab". Cars brought police who did little more than occasionally force the pickets to walk about until, encouraged by special anti-picket legislation brought in by the Hanlon Government, they resorted to heels kicking as a means of tripping the pickets, and elbow punching which at times lead to outright manhandling. But worse was to come.

The Railway Commissioner went to Court on 27 February and obtained a back-to-work order on the striking railwaymen. From press editorials and statements, the Disputes Committee gleaned warnings that the Government was preparing something drastic designed to drive the strikers back to work. The *Courier-Mail* blazoned "Now Comes The Test Of Law". The *Telegraph* indicated advance information with the headline "Truncheon Next?" The press was right, brutal intimidation of workers was on the way; but its effect was the opposite to that intended.

The State Government declared a state of emergency late in the evening on Friday 27 February. Extraordinary powers were given the police. Counselling strike action had become a crime. Severe penalties for disobeying the Court order were introduced. The Railway Commissioner added to the grim picture with a declaration that strikers and locked-out railwaymen refusing to return to work would be sacked.

Over the Queensland radio stations, including the national station, Hanlon delivered a Red-baiting ranting tirade. Mick O'Brien was refused time to reply to Hanlon's reckless accusations against the strike leadership, and the Disputes Committee then found it impossible to have decisions and statements from the Committee run by the Queensland press or radio news services. The southern press and radio followed suit with this most undemocratic censorship.

The day after the emergency declaration, Saturday 28 February, the Disputes Committee met and hit back hard with the following statement:

> As the action now taken constitutes a threat to the whole Trade Union Movement we believe this reactionary move must be answered now by solidarity actions from the rest of the workers . . . beginning with Watersiders, Seamen, and inter-state Railwaymen.
>
> We therefore appeal to those unions to join us in what has now become a common struggle. We believe, too, that the unions already involved should use whatever additional forces they may have at their disposal.
>
> Our cause is just. Our unity unshaken. Victory will be ours.

This serious declaration, gravely affecting the community, received no publicity in the press or on radio. But Hanlon was to quickly find that he had brought down a hornets' nest upon his head.

The Queensland Trades and Labor Council held an extraordinary meeting on 29 February with an attendance of union delegates overflowing one of the largest rooms in the Trades Hall. The meeting unanimously endorsed the declaration of the Disputes Committee and carried the following, which included resolutions unanimously carried by the Disputes Committee prior to the public declaration:

> That this extraordinary meeting of the Trades and Labor Council of Queensland, called as the result of the use of Fascist-like strike breaking emergency measures by Premier Hanlon, declares that the policy and leadership of Premier Hanlon has turned Queensland into a low-wage State and is responsible for the present strike. We further declare Premier Hanlon's Fascist-like emergency measures have a strike breaking purpose only. His given reasons for their introduction are entirely false, because the Disputes Committee has already manned and was prepared to continue emergency food and water trains.
>
> This desperate anti-working class action of Premier Hanlon far exceeds that of ex-Premier McCormack in 1927, and unless successfully challenged will wreck the Labor Government and

ensure the return of a Tory Government to control this State. We declare that in order to save the Labor Government from being wrecked Premier Hanlon must be forced to resign and the emergency measures withdrawn.

We, therefore, call upon the Trade Unions, both Federal and State, members of the Parliamentary Labor Party, The Queensland Central Executive, all Labor Party branches and all decent honest people who believe in the great cause of the Labor Movement, to exert the utmost pressure to enforce the immediate removal of Hanlon as Parliamentary Leader of the Labor Party and thus save the Queensland Labor Government from disgrace and defeat.

A further resolution called upon the Australian Council of Trade Unions "to exert, and have all Federal Unions exert the utmost pressure to force Hanlon to lift the imposition of such emergency measures from the workers of Queensland."

The propaganda machinery of the Disputes Committee was running so well by then that thousands of leaflets setting out the declaration of the Committee were on hand at the meeting of the Trades and Labor Council for delegates to take away for distribution. The declaration had been phoned and telegrammed to centres throughout the State, with a call for mass meetings of strikers and stood-down railwaymen who had not returned to work to be held on Monday 1 March. The following guarantee was given by the Committee:

> We give them our assurance that all unions now involved in the dispute will not accept any settlement terms unless the interests of those stood-down men are fully protected, and that they, too, receive the same marginal increases and week-end penalty rates as those with similar classifications in other State Railway Systems.

The first of March was the dead-line for railwaymen to obey the Court order and return to work but, as previously proved, bluntly issued orders from Industrial Tribunals never settle strikes but merely provoke the defiant to stiffen their resolve. Mass meetings of railwaymen, with record numbers, mushroomed throughout Queensland on 1 March 1948 ranging to the far north and as far inland as Cloncurry and Roma. The Central Disputes Committee was deluged with telephone calls and telegrams from centres conveying resolutions endorsing the Committee's declaration.

Although picketing was banned under the Emergency Regulations of Premier Hanlon, 2000 pickets were at the gates of the Ipswich

Railway Workshops on this day, and pickets were in force at the Milton Tramway Workshops and outside the large Mayne Junction Railway Running Sheds. In the front ranks of the pickets at Mayne, advising them of their legal rights, was Fred Paterson, MLA for Bowen, and a practising barrister before entering Parliament. At all times temperamentally calm, his presence on a picket line, and it was often, not only inspired the pickets but ensured a balanced restraint was kept despite the attitude of the police. The police eventually "got" Paterson with a cruel and brutal baton blow. Fred, a Queensland Rhodes Scholar, held the Bowen seat for the Communist party.

Two of the strongest unions in Australia came rushing to the assistance of the strikers. On 1 March the waterside workers in all Queensland ports struck work demanding: "that the Government end the dispute on the rail unions' terms, and repeal the Fascist-like Emergency Regulations." On the same day the Seamens' Union put a ban on all shipping to Queensland ports. Interstate railwaymen set about preventing the transport of goods into Queensland. No state had ever before come under such heavy trade union sanction.

The following week was a critical one for the Queensland unions with mass meetings continuing and leaflets streaming out from the Brisbane Trades Hall to all corners of the State. The news media, playing down the seriousness of the situation and the strong position the strikers had been placed in, featured front page headlines of "Black Ban Is Ignored", "Strike Trains Running".

But the true position facing the Government, and Court, could not be entirely glossed over. The Brisbane *Telegraph* on 3 March first stated that some rail workers were still on their jobs, but went on to admit "the number was less than yesterday". It had also to admit that "fewer tramway men are back at the Milton shops, according to the official estimates", and that at the Ipswich Workshops "only apprentices and a few other workers passed through the gates, few strikers defying the instructions of the union leaders." Tucked into a corner was "Trade union leaders in the south expect to completely blockade the movement of goods by rail and sea to and from Queensland by the end of this week."

Several rail unions, with established provisions for this, were paying out regular amounts of strike pay each week. Thousands of members of other unions had to share the finance raised by the Disputes Committee and Trades and Labor Council as equitably as possible, and often the weekly payment per striker was pitiably

inadequate. Relief committees of men and women sprang up in the main centres and in a number of areas in Brisbane. Canvassing donations of money and food, these people, quietly working throughout each day, assisted many homes through extreme difficulty. Parcels of food or orders for groceries were going out from the Trades Hall to homes, arranged by the Disputes Committee. The cost of relief to the unions and supporters amounted to over £90,000 ($180,000).

Not invariably a parcel of relief goods would be turned away from a home where it was known the economic position had become most serious with the words "Oh! Don't leave it here take it to . . . they need it more than we do, poor things."

Further trade union reserves came forward. The Queensland Trades and Labor Council Women's Auxiliary applied itself to matters of relief work and, on a rostering system, were at the Trades Hall very early each morning to prepare hot substantial breakfasts for the men coming off their early morning picketing. Most of the women came long distances to give their assistance, and as morale boosters they must have been invaluable.

The press ran a statement from Premier Hanlon that he was prepared to meet the union leaders, "and had been at all times". The Disputes Committee took him at his word and waited on him on 4 March. The lengthy interview served no good purpose. The Premier had no proposals to offer that would aid a settlement of the dispute, and at one stage of the discussion said he "didn't care whether the trains ever ran again."

Next day members of the full Labor Caucus were provided with the opportunity of expressing their views on the strike to a mass of strikers. Railwaymen and waterside workers met in Brisbane, occupying separate halls. After hearing reports and carrying resolutions on continuing the strike, the men at both meetings were asked at exactly the same time of the day to march to Parliament House. This was pre-arranged between the Disputes Committee and the Executive of the Waterside Workers' Union. So, simultaneously, railwaymen and waterside workers hurried from their meeting places and before anyone could effectively say them nay about 3000 striking workers were at the doors of Parliament House. Although delegates from the Disputes Committee were allowed to enter the House, their request to discuss the strike with the Labor Party Caucus, or at least some members of it, failed. It was the first meeting of the full Caucus since the strike began. The mass of demonstrators returned in an orderly manner to their respective

meeting places to reaffirm determination to remain on strike until their demands were met.

Next day brought a further broadening of the strike front. A British tanker slipped through the black ban on Queensland ports and discharged her oil into the Shell Depot at Newstead Wharf, on the Brisbane River. Within days both the depot and the oil were declared "black". The main unions, with the exception of the Storemen and Packers, withdrew their members from the depot. But some 300 casual storemen and packers decided unanimously at a Trades Hall meeting that they would not accept work at the oil depot. A meeting of the permanent storemen and packers employed at the depot carried a resolution by a narrow majority, and after long and often heated debate, to continue working. However, a number of them refused to carry on working, joined the strikers, and assisted in picketing the Shell Depot.

On the day this meeting was held police moved in an intimadating manner to the Trades Hall. While a large number of them surrounded the building for hours, several plain clothes men entered, stood outside the meeting and later were found using stand over tactics on unionists. Mick Healy, General Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council, with some difficulty got the police out of the Hall. From then on the doors of the Trades Hall were kept closed as much as possible.

To add more colour to that day the President of the Queensland Branch of Miners' Federation, Tom Miller, advised the Disputes Committee that all coal mines in the Ipswich District, excepting five exempted by the union, were idle with miners on strike in support of the railwaymen.

Parliament met on 9 March 1948. Premier Hanlon played his last card which was meant to be a devastating blow against the defiant trade unions, and to smash their resistance to his law and the Court's orders. But it smashed the last remaining vestige of right, in the estimation of the trade union movement, the Queensland Government may have still held to the claim of being "Labor".

The Labor Party, Queensland Peoples Party, and Country Party, in close combination, rushed through Parliament the Industrial Law Amendment Act – the most vicious measure ever enacted in Australia. The *Courier-Mail* of 10 March, referring to the sweeping powers allowed the police under the Act said: "These powers, it was stated in political circles last night, are the most far reaching ever given to the police in any State in Australia."

The Bill for the Act was introduced to Parliament as midnight approached on 9 March. Hurried through all stages, it had its final blessing just as the cock crowed at dawn. It reiterated the emergency powers taken by the Government on 27 February 1948 and provided for arrest without warrant.

The *Courier-Mail,* under the front page heading "No more picketing", referred to the Act as one of the most drastic ever brought before an Australian Parliament and explained that the police were given power to arrest pickets anywhere without warrant, and the onus was on the person to satisfy the police that he was not picketing; police sergeants or higher ranking officers had been given very wide powers to enter premises and to use force if necessary; penalties of up to £100 ($200) or six months' imprisonment for breaches of the Act were provided.

Only three members opposed the Bill: Fred Paterson, Tom Aikens (Independent, Mundingburra) and Frank Barnes, nicknamed "Bomb-shell Barnes" (Independent, Bundaberg). Hanlon, introducing the Bill, said: "You might call this Bill the Paterson Bill because he [F. Paterson, Communist Member for Bowen] is getting round the picketing and circumventing the law by walking up and down the road, and it has been necessary to strengthen the law."

In one of his "righteously" fulminating moments Hanlon said the Bill would cover the terrorizing or threatening of people: "One of the foulest developments of the strike has been persons going to peoples' homes between midnight and 4 a.m., waking up the wife of a man who might be away, who might be away at work, and telling her what was going to happen to her husband", he exclaimed with mock emotion. It was a scandalous statement proved to be without a shred of truth. In fact it was an exact description of how the wives of strikers and union officials were going to be "threatened and terrorised" by police under the new legislation.

In Parliament Fred Paterson asked for some concrete evidence of this accusation. He got none. He said "Personally, I think it is an insult to the members of the trade unions to suggest that anyone has been going round intimidating and insulting wives, children and parents." He went on to say he wanted to make his position perfectly clear, and if any women, parent, or child had been intimidated or abused he was opposed to such action. "If there has been any intimidation of wives, children or parents, there should have been some concrete evidence and prosecutions" he claimed. The Premier could only try to justify his

statement by saying "The difficulty was to get the people to give the evidence."

However, there was soon concrete evidence forthcoming of innocent people being intimidated by the police. In one case six members of the Force (five in plain clothes, one in uniform), the breath of some carrying the smell of alcohol, paid a late evening visit to a home (the author's) where the woman of the house was alone, ransacked the home and terrorized, and threatened, the woman.

Within a few hours of the legislation becoming law the Central Disputes Committee made its attitude clear. A statement condemning the Act was issued. A leaflet was dispatched nation-wide setting out the main features of the Act along with such statements as: "The Act legalises scabbery, smashes picketing, justifies intimidation and violence against workers, makes strikes illegal – and above all attempts to destroy Trade Unionism – prohibits the union from issuing propaganda on the strike, arrests can be made without warrant, police have power to enter homes and union offices at any time. 'Hanlon's Fascist-like legislation will not succeed, Queensland and Australian Trade Unionists will see to that.' "

A resolution carried by the full Disputes Committee called for the assistance of the Federal Unions to defeat the Act and compel its withdrawal. It called for an intensification of picketing throughout the State and the holding of mass meetings of protest to be sent to Hanlon. The demands giving rise to the strike were reiterated.

A meeting of the Queensland Trades and Labor Council endorsed the action of the Committee and telegrams from the Council were sent to all Federal Unions and State Labor Councils urging action to defeat the intentions of the Act and the granting of the strikers' demands.

Picketing continued and the new Act began to bite immediately. Six pickets in Brisbane were served with summonses, among them Mick Healy, Trades and Labor Council Secretary, and Ted Englart of the Watersiders' Federation.

That same day a deputation from the Disputes Committee was elected to meet the newly-installed Commissioner for Railways, T. E. Maloney, who had taken over midst the industrial hurly-burly from retiring P. R. T. Wills. A new offer was waiting for the Committee. The deputation was told that the Department would not oppose an increase of 12s. 4d. ($1.23) a week for fitters only, but the rate for all other classifications, and week-end penalty rates, would have to be determined by the Arbitration Court. Whilst to know that the old offer of

6s. 10d. (69c) for tradesmen had been forced much higher was pleasing to the deputation, this was seen as a would-be cunning move to cut losses and then divide to conquer. If accepted it would cut tradesmen away from all lower grades of employees, the semi-skilled and unskilled, and these would not receive the same marginal increases as their counterparts in other state railway systems. The Commissioner's offer, in the manner it was presented, meant that labourers would receive an increase of no more than 1s. 1d. (11c) a week. In any case marginal increases for all Queensland railwaymen, in full accord with the formula as accepted in the south, was the demand of the strikers. The offer was rejected.

Mass meetings in centres buttressed this decision of the Disputes Committee. On Friday 12 March a record number of workers massed and marched in procession through the main street of Townsville protesting against the Industrial Law Amendment Act, despite police warning that they were guilty of taking part in "a procession, not being a funeral". A back to work resolution moved at the mass meeting in Brisbane was defeated by 1000 votes to fifty-seven, and at a meeting in Ipswich by 1900 to fifty.

To express the concern and support of the labour movement in New South Wales, Jack Ferguson, New South Wales Secretary of the ARU and State President of the ALP arrived in Brisbane. He addressed meetings in Brisbane and Ipswich before going north as far as Cairns. He spoke publicly of the Queensland strike being a just one, the measures adopted by Premier Hanlon to enforce his opposition to the men's claims were, he said, "tyrannical, provocative, and certain to inspire widespread working class resentment", and "it is evident Hanlon seeks to outdo Victorian Tory Premier Hollway's attempts to suppress the workers' right to strike." Hollway had not long before attempted to force striking unionists back to work with much the same measures as those being adopted by Hanlon, but the Victorians on strike had won their claims. Jack Ferguson ridiculed the accusations of Premier Hanlon and the press that the Central Disputes Committee was communist dominated.

At this time the AFULE leadership was showing signs of wilting and on 15 March the Divisional Council of that union ordered the members back to work, although many, particularly in northern centres, were willing to remain with the strikers. That the AFULE on this occasion was prepared to indulge in strike activity for some four or five weeks was in direct contrast to performances of its officials in

other times of industrial trouble in the railway. The Disputes Committee conceded due credit with the knowledge that the union's State President, Theo Kissick, had strongly urged that the AFULE remain with the strikers. This return to work had little effect other than, may be, to prolong the strike. Anyway, they were not long back working when all but a small percentage of the locomotives were in an unroadworthy condition for want of tradesmen's attention.

The fifteenth of March was significant for another reason. It was the first day the police actually used violence on the strikers. Some 400 pickets returning to the Brisbane Trades Hall after picketing at the Shell Oil Depot were set upon by police and roughly handled as the police tried to disperse the marchers and seize placards bearing "Abolish Hanlon's Slave Law", "Remember Eureka", "Stop Fascism Now", "Remove Hanlon, Save Labor", "Don't Scab". It resolved itself into a running battle all the way to the Trades Hall with members of the general public assisting the marching men as they were driven into disarray and again re-formed. The afternoon press highlighted the encounter with heavily scored announcements of the police breaking up the party in a determined way, and with drawn batons. The seriousness and tension of picketing was occasionally relieved with a flash of banter between pickets and uniformed police who, unlike the plain clothed "demons", showed a fair degree of tolerance. Undeterred by the rough handling, the pickets were out again early the next morning and the first plain-clothed arm of the law they met, who was wearying of the continuing early morning long walks, greeted the first line of serious-faced men with: "When are you bloody galahs going to give this silly game away?" Some grinning but no comment. Silence on the picket line was the firm order. On one occasion taking an unfamiliar side street to avoid "demons" and with a uniformed constable repeating "Don't come down here" the several hundred determined pickets found they had jammed themselves into a narrow dead-end to the amusement of the chuckling one in uniform – "Well, I tried to warn you stubborn lot of donkeys", he taunted.

Then, with a heavy, threatening cordon of police surrounding the Brisbane Trades Hall for days, one of the ugliest scenes of naked brutality in the history of Australia was enacted. Bloody Saint Patrick's Day, 17 March 1948, when the patron saint of Ireland bowed his head in shame and anguish.

In Melbourne the full Executive of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, with Mick O'Brien and Alex MacDonald attending and

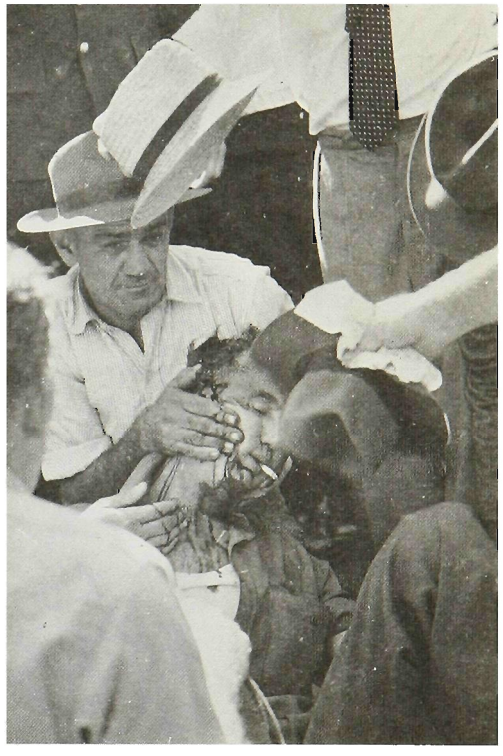
reporting on the Queensland strike, had just carried a resolution of full support for the strike when word came of the bashing of strikers by police in Brisbane.

On the forenoon of that Saint Patrick's Day a procession of men, women and youths quietly left the Brisbane Trades Hall, three abreast, with the Australian and Eureka flags carried in the front ranks. A black coffin with "Trade Unionism" painted on the side was in evidence and a number in the procession held aloft shamrock-shaped placards bearing slogans protesting against the Government's handling of the strike and "Hanlon's Fascist Slave Act". The marchers had not proceeded far (some had not had time to leave the Trades Hall) when a large number of waiting police charged among them batons swinging. Some marchers fell and were walked on by police, others were kicked and punched. Women, too, were abused. Placards were roughly grabbled and arms were painfully twisted in arm lock holds.

The police violence lasted some ten minutes. The police withdrew leaving the injured, some seriously, to be attended to by their mates as best they could. Fred Paterson, MLA, was deliberately struck down and, it would seem, the act had been premeditated. Taking no part in the march, he was standing on the footpath in the company of Max Julius, a young barrister, when, without warning, he crumbled unconscious to the ground from a baton blow. The other seriously injured were Jack Grayson, ARU member, bleeding from a baton blow to the side of his face, Gerry Tippett, waterside worker, with a badly busted and broken nose which had been stamped on by a plain clothes policemen's boot when he was knocked to the ground. Fred Paterson and Jack Grayson finished up in hospital. Five others were arrested – Mick Healy, Trades and Labor Council Secretary, barrister Max Julius, AEU member Bob Myles, waterside worker "Bluey" Boyd, and Gerry Tippett, also a watersider – he was kept at the watch-house for hours with his injured nose, found later to be broken in several places. For months Fred Paterson was a very ill man. Like Paterson the only offence committed by Julius was to stand on the sideline taking notes. Julius was in sympathy with the strikers. An outstandingly clear photograph published in the Brisbane *Telegraph* showed the strikers being manhandled with Paterson and Julius standing clear of the mêlée.

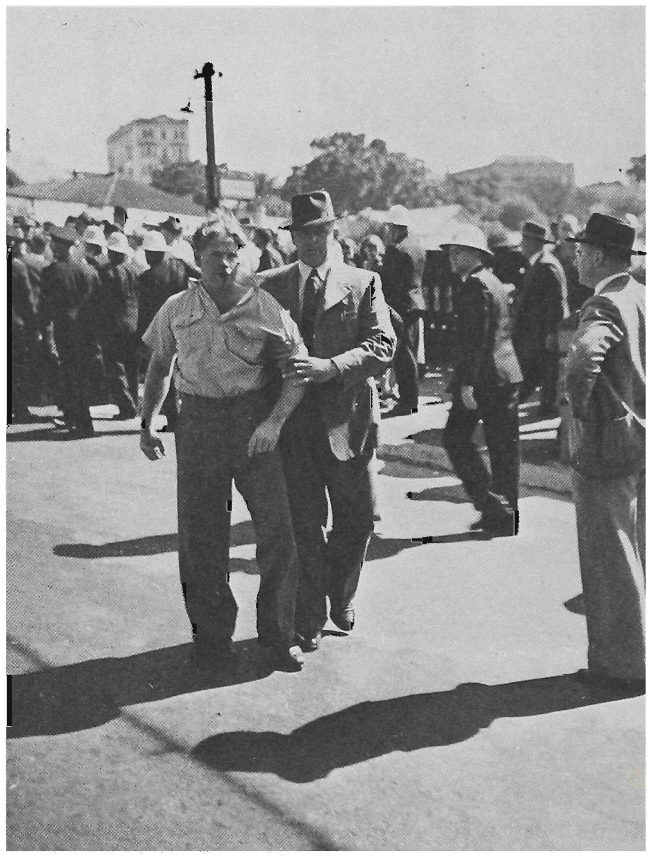
No time was lost in sending telegrams from the Brisbane Trades Hall to trade unions throughout Australia with information of the police attack. Trade and Labor Councils in all states were advised, and all strike committees in Queensland fully informed. A full report was

Brisbane, 17 March 1948. The last of the baton victims being taken under arrest and dragged to his feet by his hair. Note the baton in policeman's hip pocket. [ARU, Queensland Branch]



Jack Grayson, a member of the ARU, was struck down by a policeman's baton when taking part in the march from the Brisbane Trades Hall on St. Patrick's Day, 1948. [ARU, Queensland Branch]

Police in both plain clothes and uniform charging among the marchers on St. Patrick's Day 1948. [ARU, Queensland Branch]



Gerry Tippett, a waterside worker, under arrest after being knocked to the ground. Later his nose was found to be broken in several places. [ARU, Queensland Branch]

The aftermath of the march from the Brisbane Trades Hall on 17 March, 1948. One of the marchers being attended to by ambulance men. [ARU, Queensland Branch]

phoned to O'Brien and MacDonald at the ACTU meeting. The secretaries of large unions in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide were contacted by phone.

From then on it became more and more clear that Premier Hanlon with his mulishness had over-reached himself. Whilst he made unconvincing statements in Parliament about the marchers having fought among themselves, and how the Police Force used every effort to disperse them, showing patience and tolerance in trying to pacify them, photographs and press reports were telling the true story. Telegrams were streaming in to the Trades Hall from workers' organizations all over Australia expressing support for the strikers and reporting that protests against the police attack were being sent to the Queensland Government. Such telegrams kept arriving at the Trades Hall for days.

Workers at Townsville demonstrated in large numbers. At Bowen and Collinsville (Paterson's electorate) mass meetings took place. Miners in western, southern and northern coal pits of New South Wales stopped work for twenty-four hours and held demonstration marches. Groups of workers in several different industries in a number of places either stopped work for a period or held lunch-hour meetings to carry condemnatory resolutions to send on to Premier Hanlon. In Darwin, there was a twenty-four hours stoppage, and demonstration by members of the North Australian Workers' Union. Eleven Federal unions, representing more than 200,000 workers, met in conference and sent to Brisbane a resolution calling for the resignation of Hanlon and dismissal of the Chief of Police who had been responsible for ordering the attack on the Queensland marchers. Telegrams of protest were sent by seamen on ships at sea around the Australian coast.

Late in the evening of 17 March a telegram came from the President of the ACTU (P. J. Clarey) advising that the ACTU "condemned the savage attack by the police on trade unionists in Brisbane." The message also declared that such attacks "were a forcible prevention of the acknowledged and indisputable rights of Australian people to freedom of organisation and the freedom of free expression." The Queensland Labor Government was being called upon to prevent a repetition of such attacks, the message said.

The Central Disputes Committee, in co-operation with the Trades and Labor Council, had printed and distributed in the main streets of Brisbane, throughout the suburbs and in work places, thousands of leaflets calling upon "All decent Queenslanders opposed to thuggery and attempts to destroy the Trade Unions to demonstrate in King

George Square, Brisbane, on Friday, March 19, at 12.30 p.m."

On 18 March a deputation from the Labor Council waited on the Minister for Home Affairs (Mr. Jones) asking that he order the police to investigate the assault on Fred Paterson and that the man responsible be charged. Max Julius had said be recognized the man who hit Paterson and was prepared to identify him if given the opportunity. The deputation asked for an open inquiry into the whole incident on 17 March. The Minister refused to institute any investigation or inquiry.

The ARU *Advocate* came out with whole pages devoted to explaining the case for the strikers, strongly condemning the attack by the police, lashing out at how, it said, "The Yellow Press Gloats Over The Bashing Of Workers"; and directing many scathing remarks at Hanlon and his Government, such as "Hanlon, backed by a weak, timid and venal party, has been guilty of a gross abuse of authority. He has trampled on justice and spat in the face of Freedom . . . as sure as there is love of fair play in the hearts of men, retribution will overtake Hanlon and the cowardly collection of human donkeys in the Parliamentary Labor Party who condoned his actions . . . Hanlon's defiance of the first principles of the Labour Movement has no equal here or anywhere else . . . unionists must remember that electoral success in the Parliamentary field is not an end in itself. It must be recognised as a means towards the objective of the industrial movement."

On 19 March the crowd pressing into King George Square at the appointed hour was so huge that thousands got no nearer than adjoining streets. An estimation of the packed mass of people was no less than 20,000, not counting hundreds of policemen.

During the afternoon of the preceding day detectives had interviewed officials of the Trades and Labor Council to inform them that no permit could be issued for the proposed demonstration, and warnings of grave consequences were given to those responsible. The warnings were completely ignored.

Towards noon on 19 March 1600 waterside workers were striding, five abreast, through Brisbane's main street, heading for King George Square and holding up traffic on the way. Leading them was Jim Healy, their Federal Secretary, and members of the union Executive. People along the route clapped and cheered. A number left the sidewalk and joined in the march.

Synchronizing their arrival at the Square with that of the watersiders, hundreds of strikers poured from the Trades Hall

accompanied by a large squad of police who made no attempt to interfere. Thousands of workers in a number of different industries left jobs to join in the demonstration. Some of them found they were sacked on returning, but were re-employed shortly after.

At the Square, King George remained unmoved and seemingly unimpressed if not affronted, as union leaders were hoisted upon the royal, polished pedestal to deliver short addresses. But the assembly was so vast that only a section could have heard. Word was carried round for the demonstration to transfer the short distance to the Trades Hall. Streams of humanity began flowing along several streets towards the new gathering place and soon the wide roadway in front of the Trades Hall was jammed with people, with hundreds still coming to stand in side streets, or in the park nearby. Never before had such a public meeting taken place in Brisbane. The people had in truth taken charge of the streets.

The police stood around quietly, endeavouring to ignore the thick scattering of placards held aloft calling for the removal of Premier Hanlon, to "Save Labor", "Sack Police Thugs", "Stop Fascism". From a balcony on the second floor of the Trades Hall representatives of trade unions and the Trades and Labor Council delivered speeches, aided by a public address system. A message from Fred Paterson was read saying: "As soon as I am physically able I will again take my place in the front line with all those who love liberty, with all those who fight tyranny, brutality, and oppression."

Proceedings lasted an hour. A recommended resolution was declared carried, the voices of any dissenters being drowned by an overwhelming burst of affirmation and cheers. It read:

> This mighty demonstration of thousands of Brisbane citizens records its opposition to, and demands the repeal of the vicious anti-working class legislation of the Hanlon Government.
>
> We condemn the brutal attack launched upon a peaceful workers' demonstration in Brisbane on Wednesday and assert that, by his defence of such tactics, Hanlon proves himself unfit to govern this State and should resign forthwith.
>
> We endorse the demands for marginal increases of 16s. [$1.60], 13s. [$1.30] and 11s. [$1.10], and week-end penalty rates, and demand that the Government settle this strike by granting those demands.

Over the next few days mass meetings in State centres carried resolutions along similar lines. It was now known to the Disputes

Committee that not more than ten per cent of the railway locos were in workable condition, with each day reducing this percentage. The bones of the skeleton Rail Service were fast falling apart.

A series of events shot off on a tangent, as intriguing to the strikers as it was unexpected. At a mass meeting of about 2000 strikers at the Brisbane Trades Hall a handful of ballot papers posted to members of the AEU were destroyed, on stage to the cheers of the meeting. The papers, clearly numbered, carried the signature of the Industrial Registrar and were included in a ballot on the question of a return to work by AEU men employed by the Shell Oil Company, most of whom were on strike. The Court had ordered the ballot on the application made by an employee of the Company who remained on the job. It was explained by E. J. (Ted) Rowe, AEU Commonwealth Councillor, who brought the ballot papers to the mass meeting, after members had handed them over to officials of the union, that on a previous occasion when members of the AEU at a certain factory had voted in favour of a strike the Industrial Registrar had annulled it on the ground that a sectional vote was invalid and it should be a ballot among all union members in the particular industry. The numbering of the ballot papers destroyed secrecy and left members open for victimization, Rowe said.

A summons was issued citing Rowe for contempt of Court. But the police were unable to find him to bring him to Court, and thus was triggered off a nation-wide police hunt for Ted Rowe, extending over a week, with overtones of comedy and drama which culminated in Rowe handing himself over to the police at a bursting mass meeting in the Trades Hall, to riotous applause. In his absence he was sentenced by the Industrial Court to serve an indefinite gaol term, and to pay a total amount of £91 10s. ($183) including a £60 ($120) fine and £31 10s. ($63) costs.

Picketing continued with police present, but no violence was attempted, although on 23 March eight arrests were made. Among the pickets arrested was Alex MacDonald, Disputes Committee Secretary who had returned from the ACTU meeting in the south a few days before. The day of his arrest a deputation from the Executive of the ACTU arrived in Brisbane to join in the protest against what was then referred to as the "Fascist-like Anti-Picketing Act". The ACTU people had a discussion with Hanlon and later reported to a meeting of the Disputes Committee that no fresh offer had been made by the Premier.

An imposing group of visitors, or observers, were present at this meeting of the Disputes Committee – P. J. Clarey, ACTU President; his two Vice Presidents R. A. King and H. J. Harvey; Joe Cranwell, Federal Official of the AEU; E. V. Elliott, General Secretary of the Seamen's Union; Jim Healy, Waterside Workers Federal Secretary; Jack Chapple, General Secretary of the ARU and J. McPhillips, southern official of the Ironworkers' Union. After hearing reports from the visitors (who took part in discussions but had no vote) the Committee decided unanimously to proceed with the dispute until a settlement was reached, satisfactory to all railwaymen, and demanding the repeal of the Emergency legislation, withdrawal of prosecutions and an enquiry into the police action which had culminated in "the bashing of unionists on St. Patrick's Day".

On 24 March six watersiders, among them Jim Healy, Ted Englart and Alby Graham, all officials of the watersiders' union, were each fined £10 ($20), in default imprisonment for one month, for taking part "in a procession, not being a funeral" on 19 March.

Easter came and went without incident. A great amount of pro-Government and anti-strike matter was appearing in the press – statements that bore no trace of authenticity jostled with half truths and often pure lies. There were those with hopeful expectations that the holiday week-end, coming after long weeks of no work, would influence strikers to return to work. They were disappointed, and the Railways continued to make only a feeble show of providing a service.

A mass meeting of 1500 Brisbane waterside workers on 31 March endorsed their executive's recommendation to stay on strike. The same decision was made by the wharfies in other Queensland ports. The Federal Council of the Waterside Workers' Federation issued a warning that if any shipping company attempted to use scab labour in any ship in Queensland ports that company would be declared "black" throughout Australia. The General Secretary of the Seamen's Union made it known that his union would take joint action with the watersiders in this regard.

Two days after Easter the *Courier-Mail* published a statement attributed to Hanlon that "the Government would not oppose increases for lower paid workers." This was something never stated before. To the Disputes Committee it seemed a glimmer of light was appearing ahead in the murky industrial tunnel. This feeling was strengthened by the knowledge that letters had gone from politicians to persons in country centres stating how much railwaymen would get if they went

to Court.

A deputation from the Disputes Committee waited upon the Premier at twenty past five on Thursday 1 April at his office, seeking clarification of these letters. They had two with them, one sent to a person in Toowoomba by the Minister for Transport, the other forwarded by Mr. Farrell, MLA, to a person in Maryborough. Copies of both were handed to Hanlon for his comment. He was emphatic that neither the Minister nor Farrell had any authority to send a letter on behalf of the Government, and said that any authoritative communication since the dispute developed had been through him.

After some discussion on the Premier's statement which had appeared in the press stating that an increase of 12s. 4d. ($1.23) to fitters would not be opposed, Hanlon explained that this could be taken to mean: "As 12s. 4d. [$1.23] is to the fitters' present rate, so increases for all other skilled and semi-skilled men shall be to their present rate." This was interpreted by the delegation to mean an increase of 10s. 1d. ($1.01) to labourers, rising to 12s. 4d. ($1.23) for the base rate fitter, and other tradesmen, with a greater amount for tradesmen classed higher than fitters.

The Premier gave the assurance of no victimization. Other matters discussed with some satisfaction were week-end penalty rates and their retrospectivity, and also the Government's attitude to the claim for increases to the purely railway grades when heard by the Court.

The full Disputes Committee met and decided to recommend to mass meetings that work be resumed at a date to be arranged because:

> At last there is recognition forced from the Government of claims not previously recognised, and in view of the fact that the offers now made by the Government include, as well as the 12s. 4d. [$1.23] base increase, the recognition of the same ratio, or proportionate increases, to other skilled and semi-skilled grades based on the daily, or weekly rate, as now existing, which increases are above those once offered; and in view of the fact that retrospective payment of such increases will be made back to September 18, for all workshops employees; and the fact that the Government, for the first time, recognises the justice of payment of penalty rates for week-end work; and, in view of the fact that the Premier anticipates a basic wage increase — none of which propositions would have been achieved without a strike, we now believe that we should forthwith secure these gains, as well as lodge a claim for similar wage increases for the purely railway grades, and accept the agreement of the Premier to discuss such

claim.

And also in view of the fact that the repeal of the Industrial Law Amendment Act will be considered at a later date.

Mass meetings in twenty-four centres throughout the State endorsed the recommendation by overwhelming majorities.

Arrangements were made with the Railway Department, Brisbane City Council Tramway Department and the Shell Oil Company for a return to work on Tuesday 6 April. There was to be no victimization. Waterside workers in all Queensland ports, and seamen, resumed their normal work on the same day, taking with them the grateful thanks of the Disputes Committee and railway strikers for assistance rendered, not for any monetary gain to themselves, but to help defend what were seen as deep-rooted trade union principles. With the return to work of the strikers there remained a number of serious matters to be cleaned up.

First, however, immediately work was resumed it was necessary for representatives of the Committee to confer with the Commissioner to ensure complete understanding of the increases to be arranged, in accordance with what was being called the "formula" agreed to in principle, before the final figures were formally presented to the Arbitration Court for its blessing. On meeting the delegation, Commissioner Maloney astounded them by saying they had misrepresented the Premier's offer. The Commissioner presented figures that gave marginal increases to lower grades of railwaymen less than half those computed on the formula worked out in the Premier's office before the strike ended. The delegation promptly walked out, claiming a "sell out". The Premier was waited upon and he finally agreed the unions' interpretation of the formula was correct. A threatening situation fortunately was avoided. Further conferences and a visit to the Court finally had all increases confirmed to the satisfaction of the unions.

But the week-end penalty rates issue almost revived the strike. A case for the granting of these extra rates for week-end duty, and also a number of other applications for Award improvements, were lodged with the Court. Weeks passed with no move being made by the Commissioner or the Court to have the matters brought on for hearing. The Disputes Committee called for mass meetings to be held in all centres in protest against the delay and to consider further action likely to move the Court, and have the retrospective pay granted before 30 June 1948. This seems to have had a lubricating effect on the machinery of bureaucracy. Within an hour of the time for holding the

mass meetings new Awards, containing what was sought, were delivered to union offices by the Court. The mass meetings took place and resolutions were carried commending the Disputes Committee and calling for repeal of the Anti-picking Act.

Anti-climaxing the actual end of the stoppage was the dramatic re-appearance of Ted Rowe. During his "absence", without a doubt considered by both Court and police an annoying and damned nuisance, a bright railway unionist, chuckling as he rhymed, expressed the amusement of the strikers with:

They seek him here, they seek him there,
The cops they seek him everywhere,
Is he in heaven or down below,
That damned elusive Comrade Rowe.

They sighted him at Coorparoo,
And then next day at Timbucto,
He must have wings to come and go,
That damned elusive Comrade Rowe.

He left by car for Coolangatta,
From there by 'plane to Oodnadatta,
He might be now in Mexico,
That damned elusive Comrade Rowe.

He skipped from Perth to Opal Ridge,
From there he hopped to Murray Bridge,
He makes Dark Marne look mightly slow,
That damned elusive Comrade Rowe.

He may be hiding in Shanghai,
Or humping swag near Gundagai,
But when he's found let Hanlon know
That damned elusive Comrade Rowe.

The 1600 strikers at the mass meeting in the Brisbane Trades Hall on 2 April were arriving at the decision to return to work as Rowe, to the knowledge of only a few union officials, arrived by car at the rear of the building. Leaving the car unhurriedly he had passed by some of the hundreds of police cordoning the Trades Hall and was through the back door with it slammed against the police just as they realized, but too late, they had found "the elusive Comrade Rowe". Rowe walked into the mass meeting to be welcomed with a sustained ovation. In an address he said that the whole question of Federal rights had yet to be

legally tested, and his attendance at Court could have been taken to imply acceptance of something the unions intend to fight. From his explanation he avoided police detection by doing the unexpected. He acted more or less naturally, visiting one or two centres away from Brisbane, travelling by plane to Sydney and spending some days there reporting and conferring with the unions Commonwealth Council. He addressed some meetings and then flew back to Brisbane. He said it was decided he submit himself for arrest as to carry on the evasion would serve no useful purpose. He said he believed the original intention behind his arrest had failed. Word was sent out that he was ready to be arrested at the conclusion of the meeting. The police endeavoured to avoid a demonstrative send off to Rowe by escorting him out the back door. He spent a week in gaol before being released, during which time hundreds of telegrams came protesting against the Court sentence.

The law continued on its course. The first case under the Industrial Law Amendment Act was heard on 12 April 1948 and Mick Healy, Trades and Labor Council Secretary, was convicted on four picketing charges and fined a total of £277 17s. 6d. ($555.75). A total of over £1400 ($2800) in fines was imposed on thirteen others, unionists and union leaders – B. L. Bennett, D. C. Booth, D. Hanson, A. T. Nicol, P. Godfrey, J. Grayson, J. Esler, C. Graham, B. C. Tippett, M. N. Julius (barrister), E. C. Englart, C. F. Ashby and D. J. McCarthy. They represented a number of different unions, five being waterwise workers. The number of fines per person ranged from one to five. The fines were never paid by the men or their unions. Two other names went on the list, S. Boyd and Bob Miles, they were knocked about on St. Pat's Day.

On 4 August Healy, Englart and Julius were arrested and gaoled for non-payment of the fines. Both Healy and Englart were members of the Waterside Workers' Federation. On hearing of the gaolings the watersiders in Brisbane held a stop-work meeting in protest. Protests came to Brisbane from all over Queensland as well as from other states. The Queensland Trades and Labor Council met, condemned the State Government for the gaolings and declared that "unjust fines were being imposed on selected victims." Within a few days Charlie Graham and Joe Esler, both watersiders, were hauled off to gaol because their fines had not been paid. All five were treated as common felons in gaol and denied any special privileges, including cigarettes or tobacco.

The Waterside Workers' Federation, Seamens' Union, Amalgamated Engineering Union, Ironworkers' Union and the Australian

Railways Union met in Sydney and jointly declared for strike action unless the men were released from gaol, and further action under the Queensland Act dropped. The ACTU was asked to call the Emergency Committee together to plan strike action. The Queensland Railway Disputes Committee reconvened to bring about the release of the five in gaol. A well-attended open-air protest meeting was held in Brisbane, and a meeting of over 1500 workers at the Ipswich Railway Workshops condemned the Hanlon Government and suggested railwaymen take "State-wide firm action to force the Government into having the men freed." Meatworkers at Alligator and Ross Creek meatworks held stop-work meetings and they together with waterside workers and seamen at Townsville stopped work for twenty-four hours in the same cause. This activity in Queensland was reinforced by meetings of unionists on jobs at many places in the southern states where similar resolutions were carried and sent on to Queensland.

Then, some of the heat that was once more blasting the Hanlon Government was dispersed by the mysterious payment of the fines for which Healy, Englart and Julius were serving sentences. The money was said to have been found in a large envelope some unknown, and unseen, person left on the counter of a Government office. The unions and Trades and Labor Council denied paying in the money, and declared the audit of books would prove this. A statement from the Trades and Labor Council said the Government had got itself out of a threatening situation by devising a method whereby the men would be released from gaol and the Government "save face". Healy and his two prison mates were granted their freedom on 19 August 1948.

The trade union movement then raised the demand that Hanlon see to the release from gaol of Graham and Esler by remittance of their fines, and also that he honour his promise to repeal the Industrial Law Amendment Act. Brisbane seamen and waterside workers called upon their Federal union officials to take immediate action for the freeing of the two men. Other Federal unions issued statements that they were ready to co-operate in this.

Premier Hanlon was again holding a fuse-burning bomb. He introduced a Bill to repeal the Act, with the Opposition strongly objecting. The Premier told Parliament he would recommend to Cabinet next day that the remainder of the penalties imposed on people for picketing during the rail strike be remitted. Charlie Graham and Joe Esler were released from Boggo Road gaol at mid-day on 2 September.

The last scene in a kaleidoscope of revolving acts, in which a

multitude of actors had played their parts since the stopwork decision, with all its hidden implications, made on 2 February 1948, was enacted in the Arbitration Court in Brisbane a few days after the freeing of Graham and Esler. Max Julius in his role of barrister was in Court answering a charge that he had put himself in contempt of the Court.

The contempt action resulted from statements made by Julius when defending a waterside worker charged under the Industrial Law Amendment Act. During the hearing of the case he had said that: "Some of the reasons given by the Court for a particular judgment were political rubbish." The charge of contempt had been taken out against Julius when he was in gaol for non-payment of fines imposed under the anti-picketing Act. Whilst in gaol law books belonging to him were seized and sold at auction. However, the going was pretty easy for Max on this last occasion. After affirming in a statement that the reference to "political rubbish" meant politically unsound, had nothing to do with the case then being heard, and should not have been tendered, the Court must have felt its injured dignity was sufficiently salved and Julius was considered as having expunged his contempt, or, anyway, explained it away. It was taken off the books.

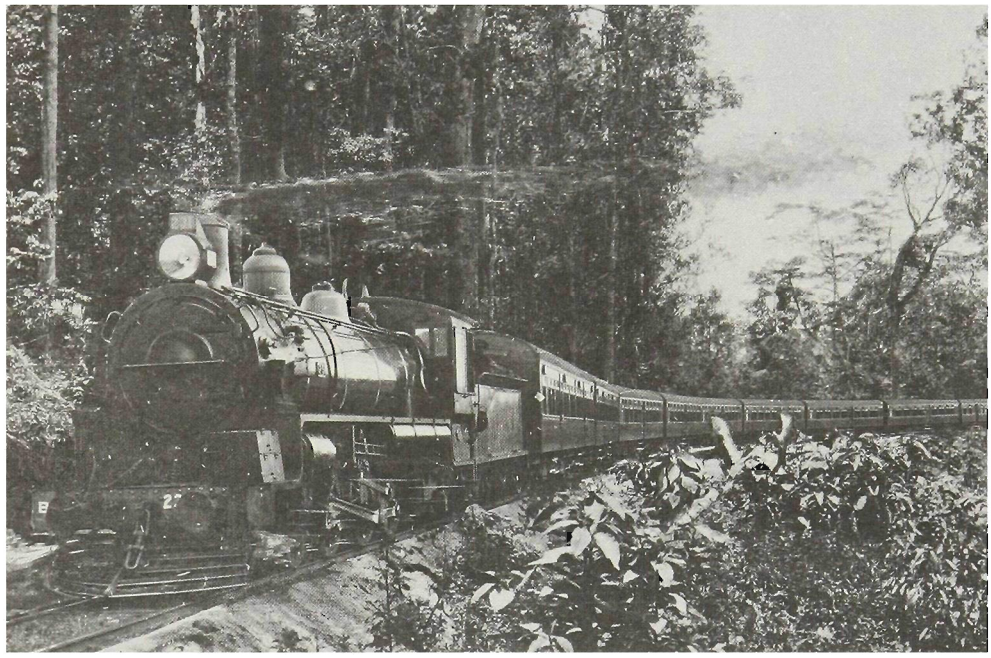
And so was played out to the ultimate and bitter end the longest and most cruelly opposed strike in the history of Queensland, and one that reverberated around the Commonwealth.

During the strike the ARU *Advocate* put forward a prediction, under the heading "Labours Political Future". Referring to what was termed "Hanlon and Coy", it said: "These individuals have grossly violated Labour principles. Unless they are immediately removed from their positions Labour's political future is doomed to disaster." The Hanlon Government carried on until the end of 1951. On 17 January 1952, V. C. Gair was Labor Premier. But, in 1957 Labor was out with the Country Party-Liberal Party coalition in and eighteen years later still holds the reins of Queensland Government.

What effect the 1948 strike had on the fortunes of Labor in Federal politics was never assessed. Was it significant that in 1949 Labor lost control of the Federal benches and remained in the political wilderness for twenty-three years until the people, in December 1972, felt it advisable to put their trust once again in a Federal Labor Government?

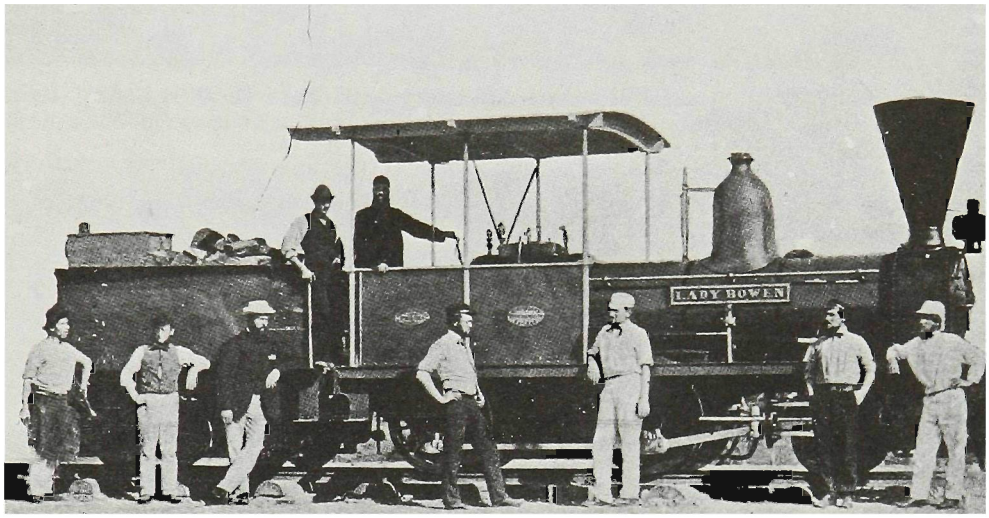
EPILOGUE

As Queensland railwaymen, their historic strike behind them, settled back into their respective niches to give the State back its railway service the end of the long, eventful life of the steam locomotive was drawing near. Only four years later, 1952, the first of the diesel-electric usurpers came rumbling in, bringing the message of progress that leaves but little opportunity to mourn the passing of the old, or acclaim the deeds of doughty pioneers; but inside the blackened railway tunnels the smell of coal smoke still lingers from that great century of steam.

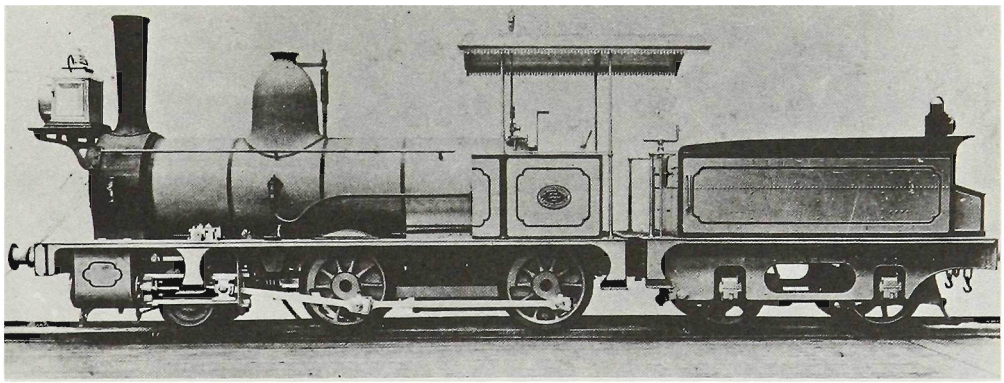


Queensland's "Sunshine Express" in 1948 passing through beautiful forest land. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

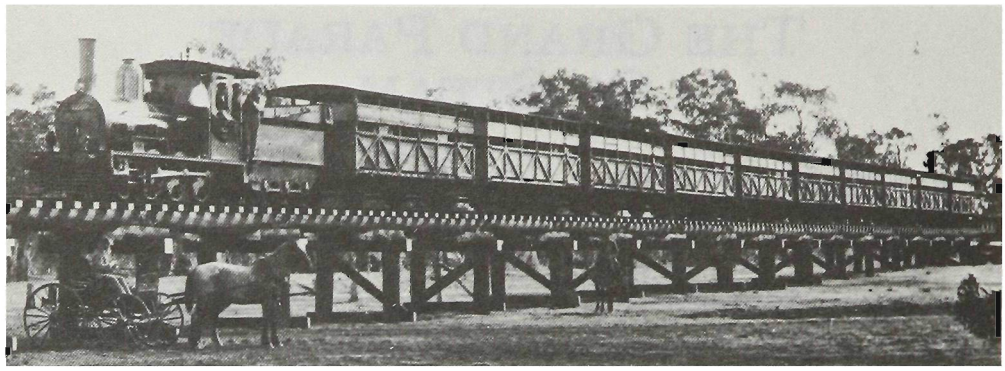
THE GRAND PARADE OF STEAM



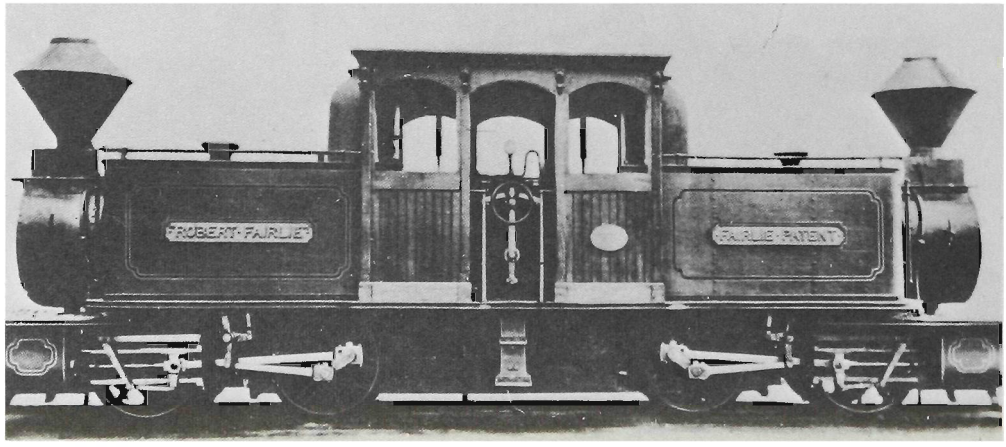
The AD (originally "A") Class – four of these tiny locomotives inaugurated the Queensland Railway Service. Named *Premier, Lady Bowen, Faught-a-Ballagh* and *Pioneer.* Built by Avonside Engineering Co., Bristol, in 1864. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



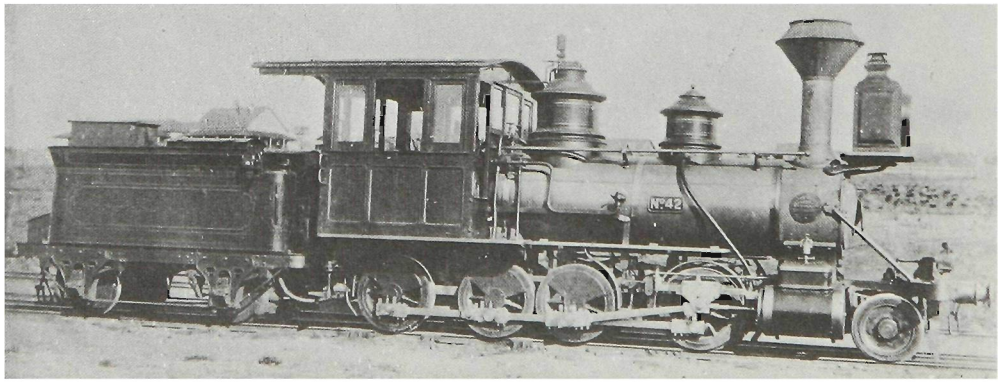
A10 class (originally "B"). No larger than the AD but differing in bogie wheels arrangements. Supplied by Neilson & Co., Glasgow, in 1865–66. Thirteen in all. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



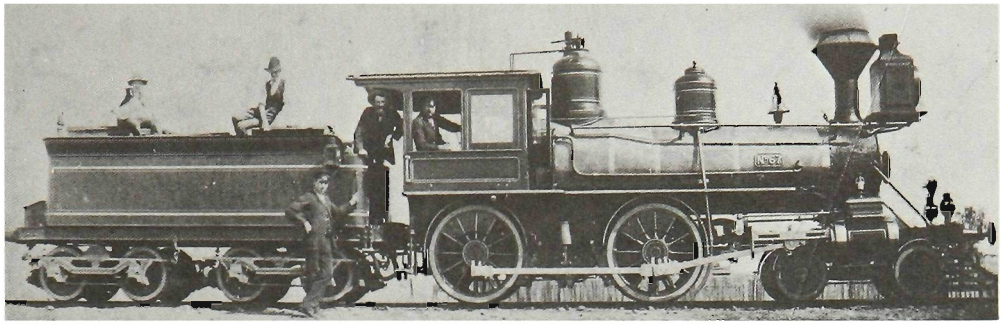
B12 (originally "E"). A total of twenty-five purchased from 1869 to 1882 – built by several firms: Avonside; Kitson; Dubs. Some assembled at Ipswich Workshop. [G. Bond Collection]



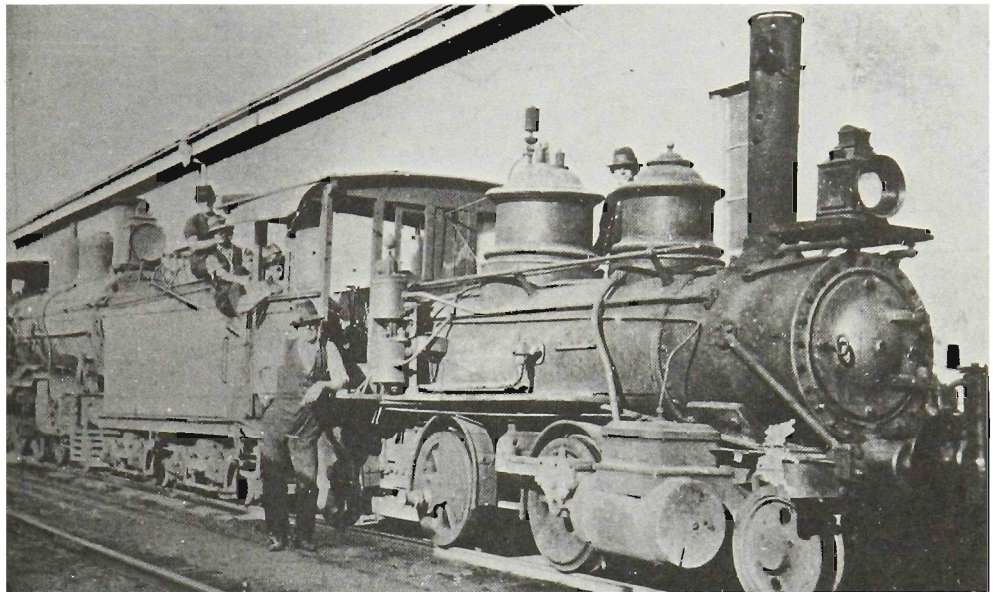
The "Fairlie Patent" Double Bogie Tank Loco. Most unusual type. Actually two locomotives in one frame. Two boilers and two funnels with a cabin in the middle. Only one went into service, in 1876. Built by Vulcan Foundry. [G. Bond Collection]



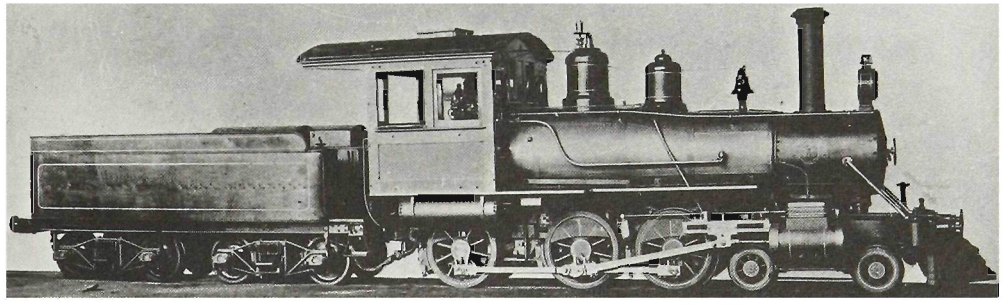
C13 (Baldwin) and C15 (Baldwin). Both these came from the United States in 1879. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



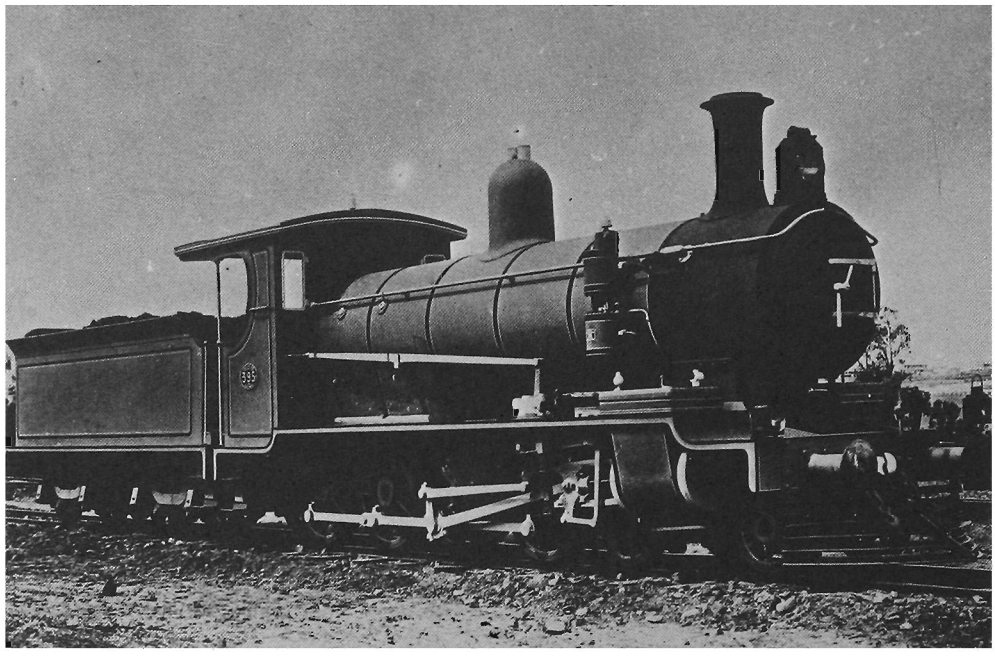
A12. The Baldwin Co. in the United States sent out eighteen in 1877–78. During 1890–91 the Brisbane firm of Evans, Anderson and Phelan built another twenty-five. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



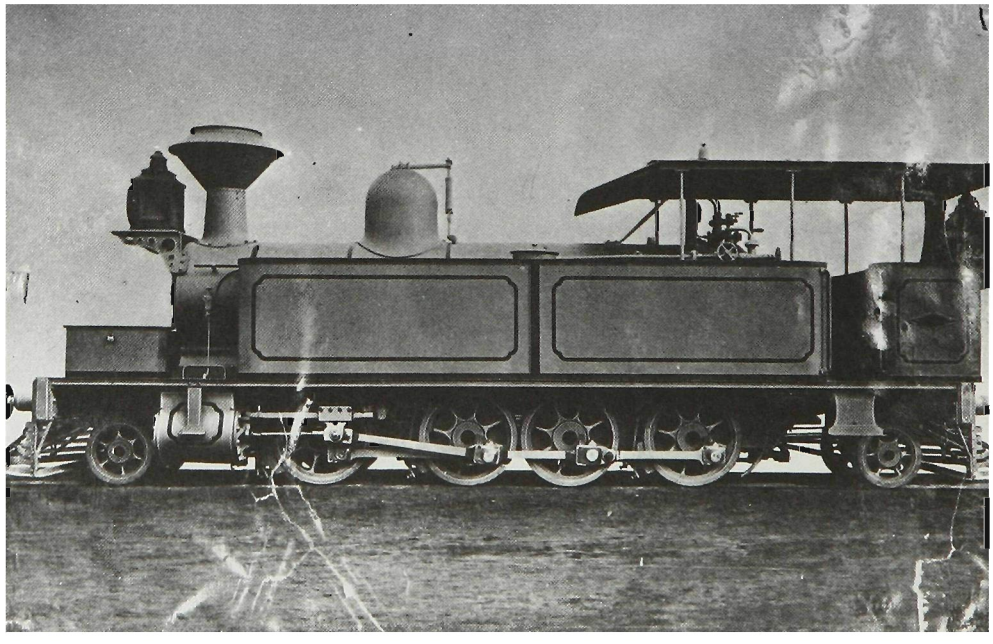
B11 Class, "Moguls", with small wheels. Two supplied by Baldwin in 1879. Spent long careers entirely in north Queensland. [G. Bond Collection]



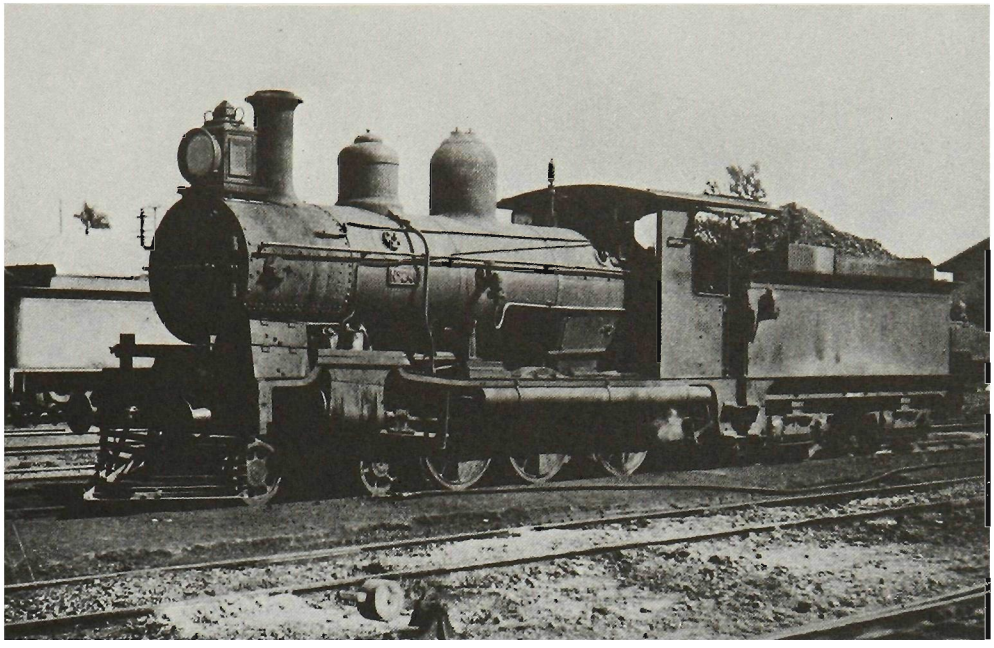
B13 (originally "F"). First introduced in 1892, with a total of 112 put into service. English firms of Kitson & Co. and Dubs & Co. built them. A longer wheel base was given to some of them later, and also a change of boiler carrying higher steam pressure for more power. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



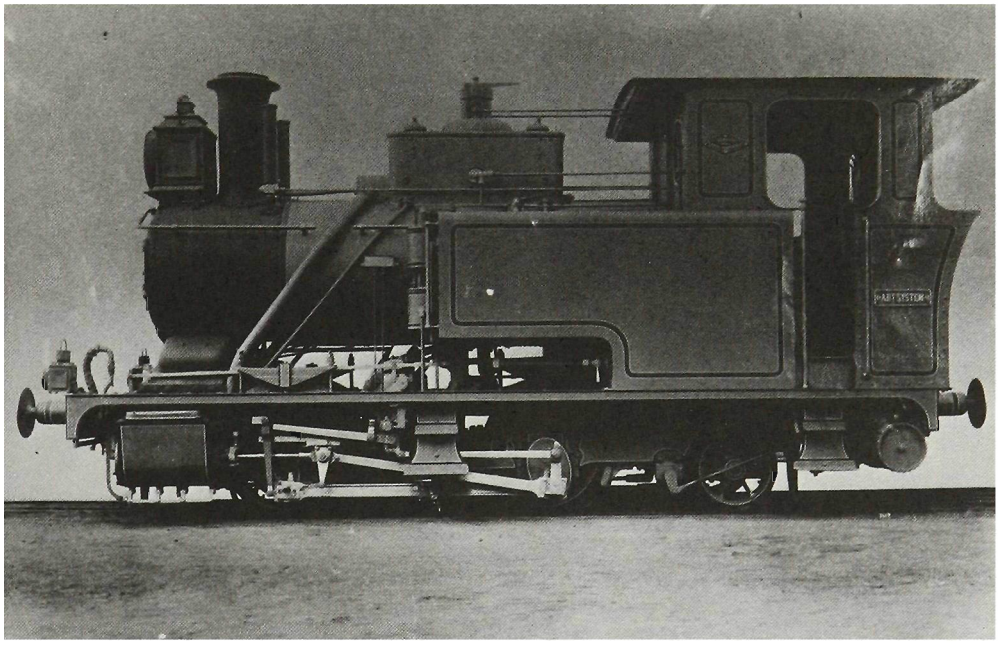
C16 (Consolidation). A few supplied by the Baldwin Co. in 1882 and put into service at Rockhampton. These were first locos capable of hauling 200 tons (203t) to arrive in Queensland. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



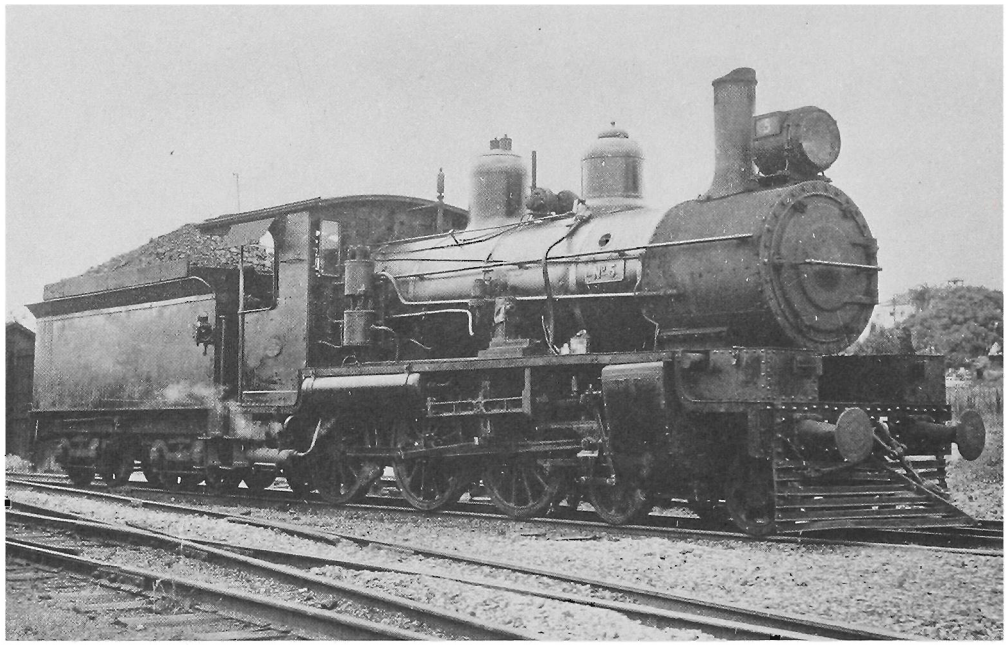
8D15 Tank Type. Came into service in 1884. Five in all and called "Donald Dinnie" after famous strong man. Used on goods trains. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



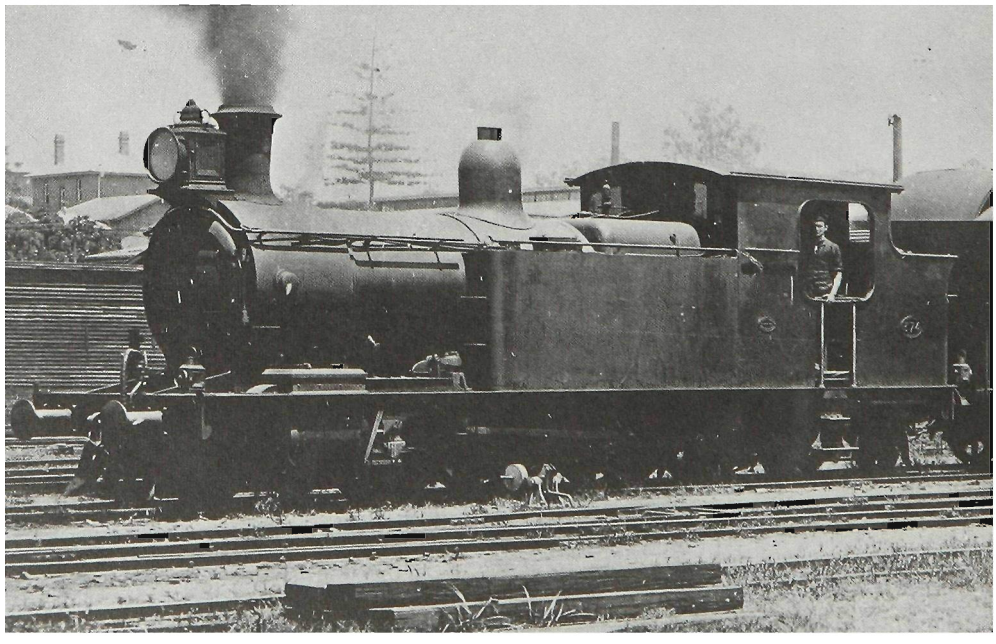
B15 Class. Built in 1889, ninety-eight were put into service. Had small driving wheels. Converted to larger wheels of 45 inches (114 cm) diameter after 1903. From then always known as Converted B15. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



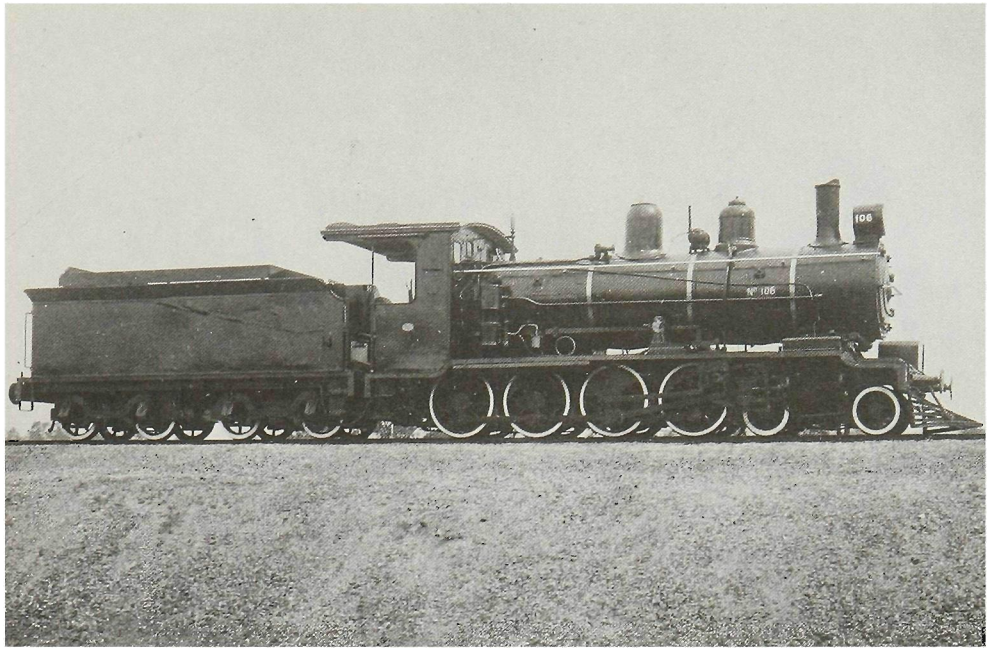
B13½ "Abt" Rack Locomotive. Specially built for the rack railway to Mount Morgan which had a grade of one in sixteen. Six put into service from 1900 to 1915. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Branch]



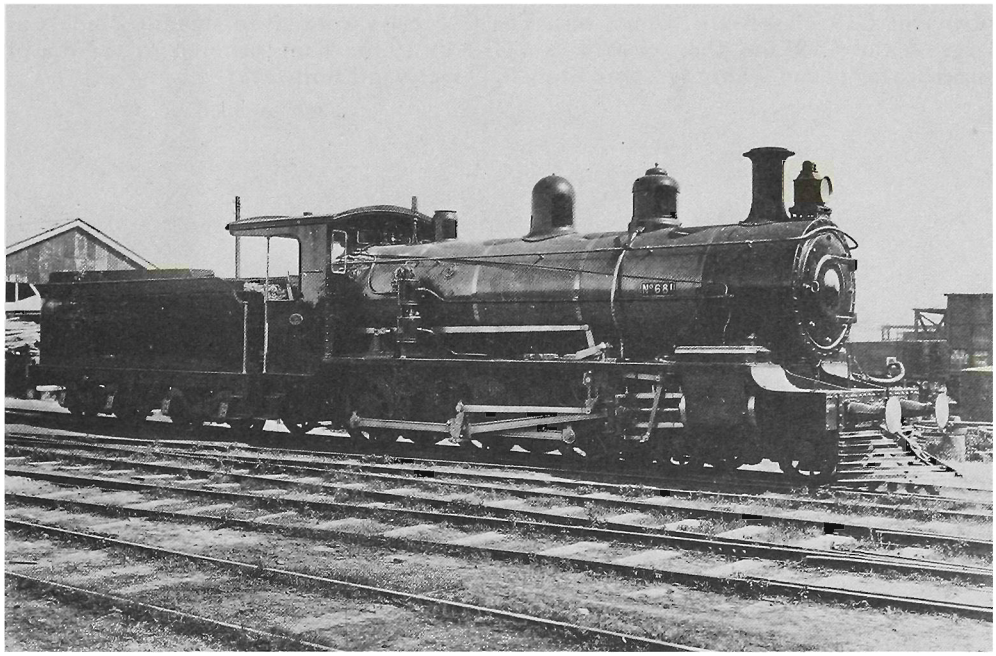
PB15 Class. A total number of 233 came into service, many more than any other class of loco introduced to the Queensland Railways. Between 1899 and 1913 the first 203 came with Stephenson link-valve motion (inside engine frame). A further thirty, with Walschaert valve gear (outside), came during the years 1925–26. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



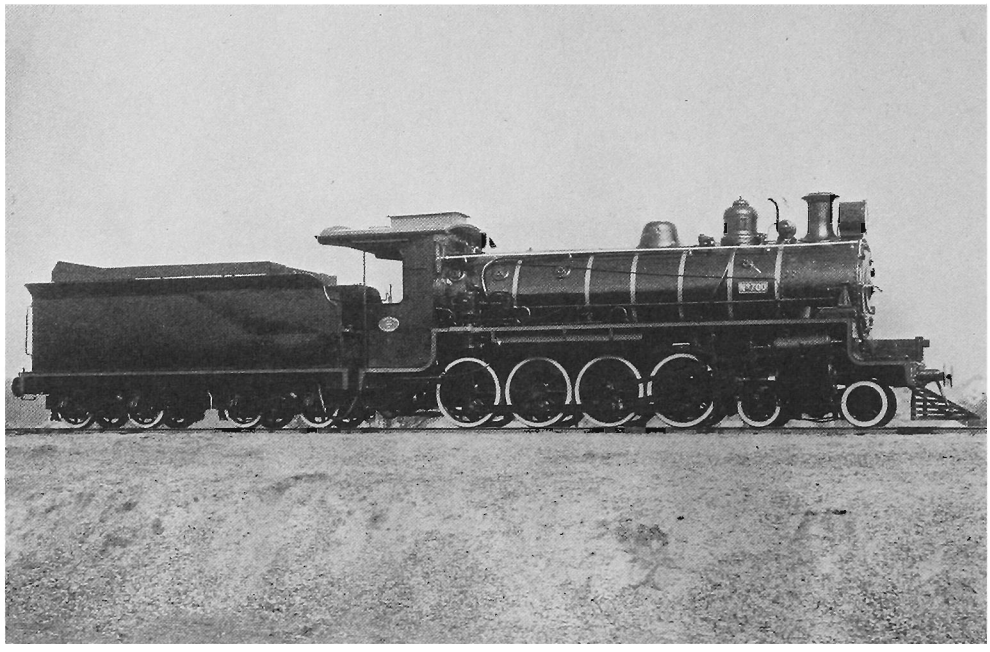
6D16 Tank Type. Twenty built by Walkers Ltd., Maryborough, 1901–2, for Brisbane suburban trains. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



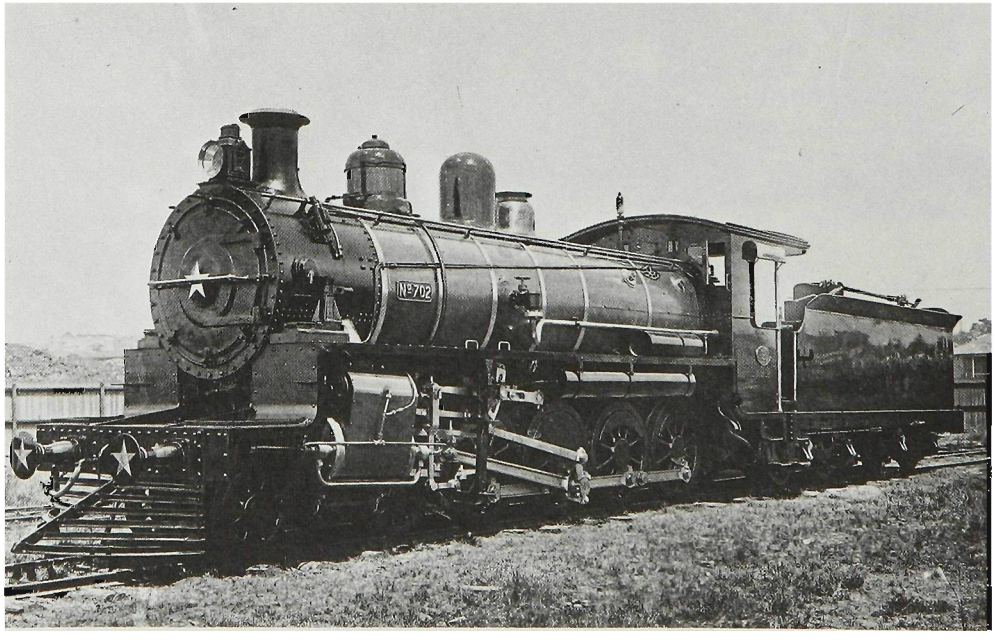
C16 Class. Local firms built 152. The first to arrive pulled the Sydney mail train. Put to use throughout the State for heavy goods and stock trains. Some loaned to the Commonwealth Railways early in World War II. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

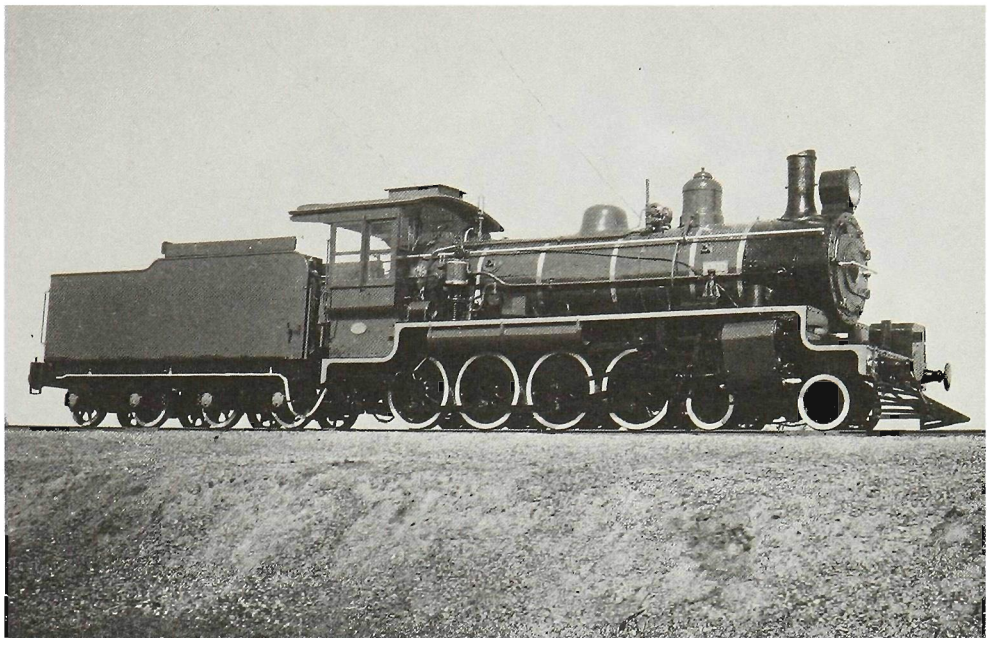


B17 Class. The Ipswich Railway Workshops built twenty-one. They came in 1911 as the largest loco with six coupled driving wheels and not working on superheated, steam. First used on mail trains. Had long wheel base. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

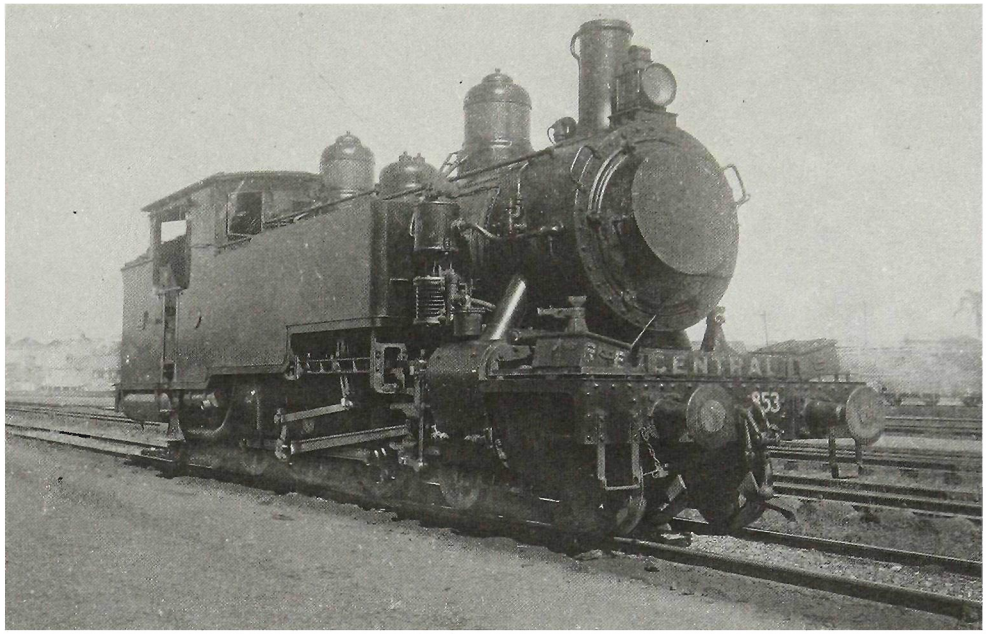


C18—C19—CC19 Classes, Largest, and most powerful, until the arrival of the Garratts. Three of the C18 class introduced in 1914 and put to hauling the Sydney mail. One named *Sir Wm. MacGregor* and another *Lady MacGregor* after the State Governor and his Lady. The third being the 100th loco built at the Ipswich Railway Workshops was named *Centenary*. Between 1922 and 1935 twenty-six of the more powerful C19 class were turned out. The C18 class were given steam cylinders as large as the C19 and then classed as CC19 in 1935. They ushered in the era of superheated steam. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]

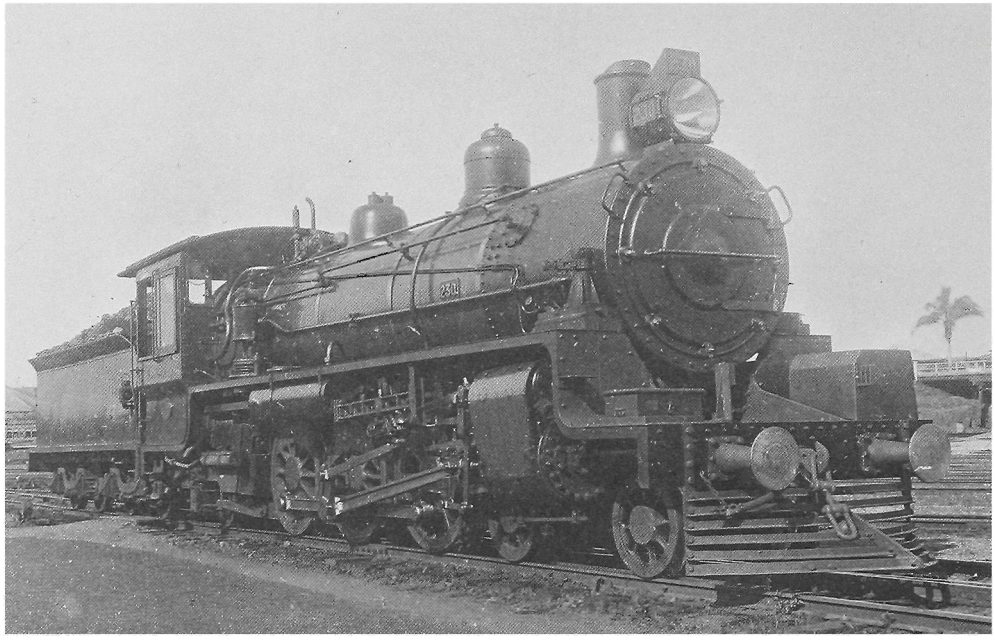




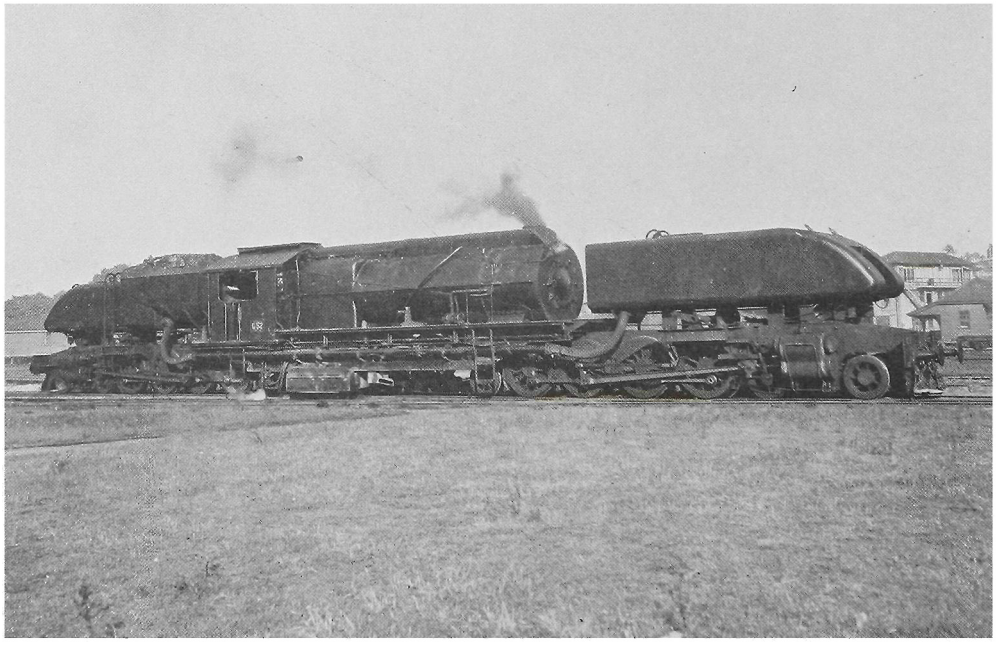
C17 Class. Identical to the NM class on the Commonwealth Railways. A total number of 223 built from 1920 until 1953. The final forty were given roller bearings. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



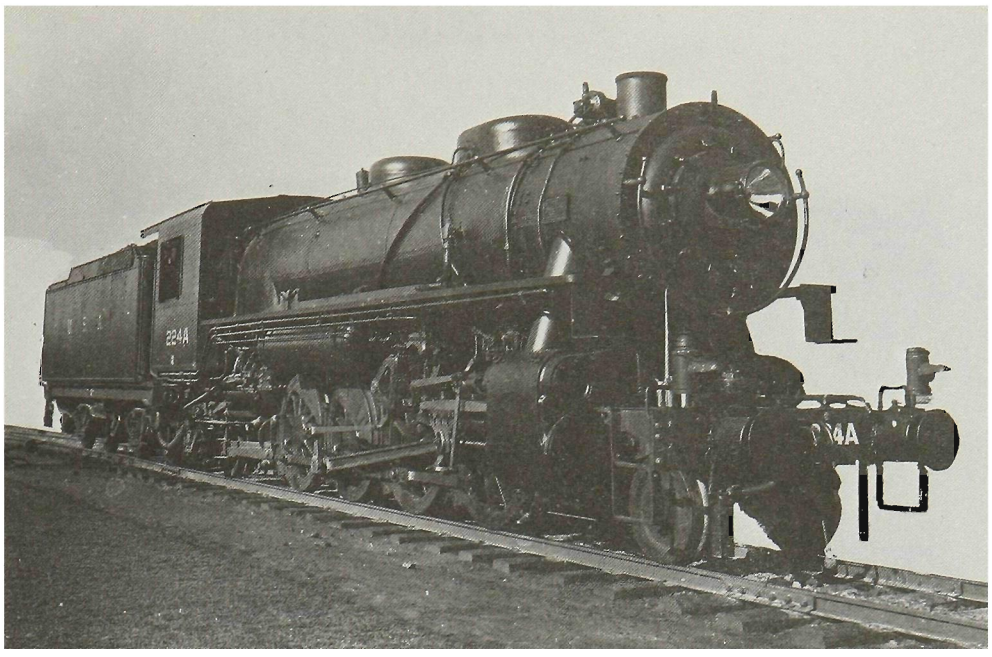
D17 (6D17) Tank Type. They were introduced for Brisbane suburban work in 1924. Walkers Ltd. Maryborough, built ten and another twenty were put out by the Ipswich Railway Workshops. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



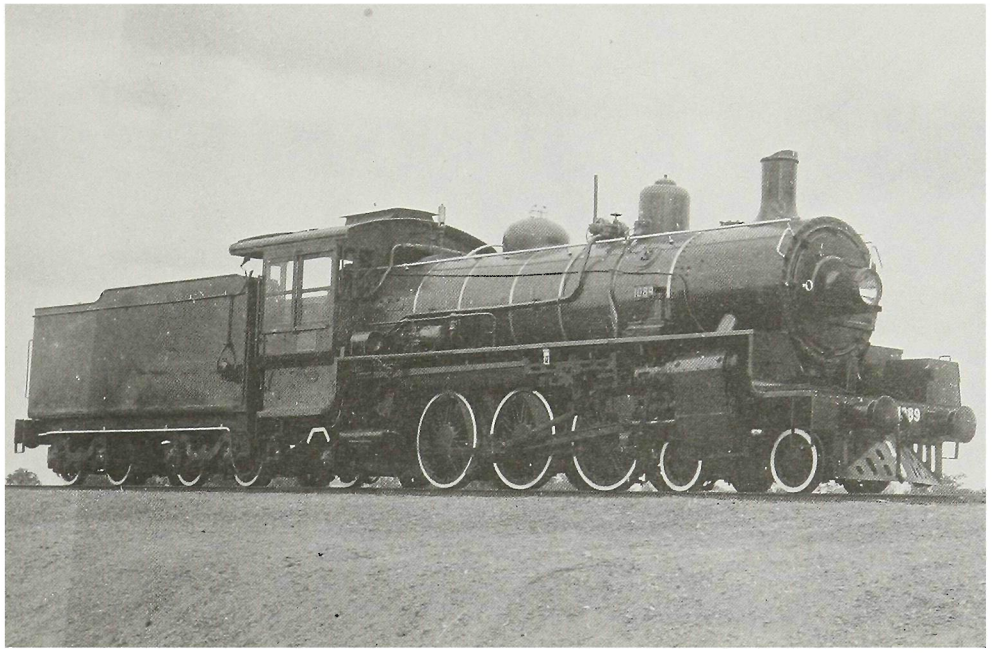
B18¼ Class. In 1926 a group of seventeen were turned out patterned on the overseas Pacific passenger type. In 1935 a further six were built with some modification. More were introduced in 1936 as a standard type. A total number of eighty-three were put into service. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



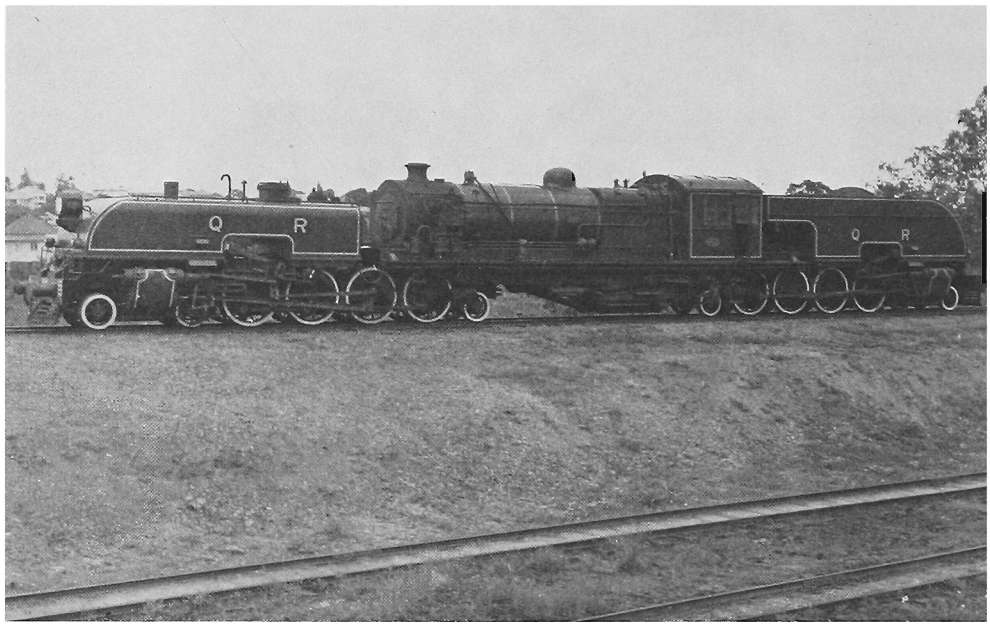
The Standard Garratt. Designed by the Commonwealth Government for Queensland in 1943. A war-time emergency, they were a failure and were withdrawn from service in 1945. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



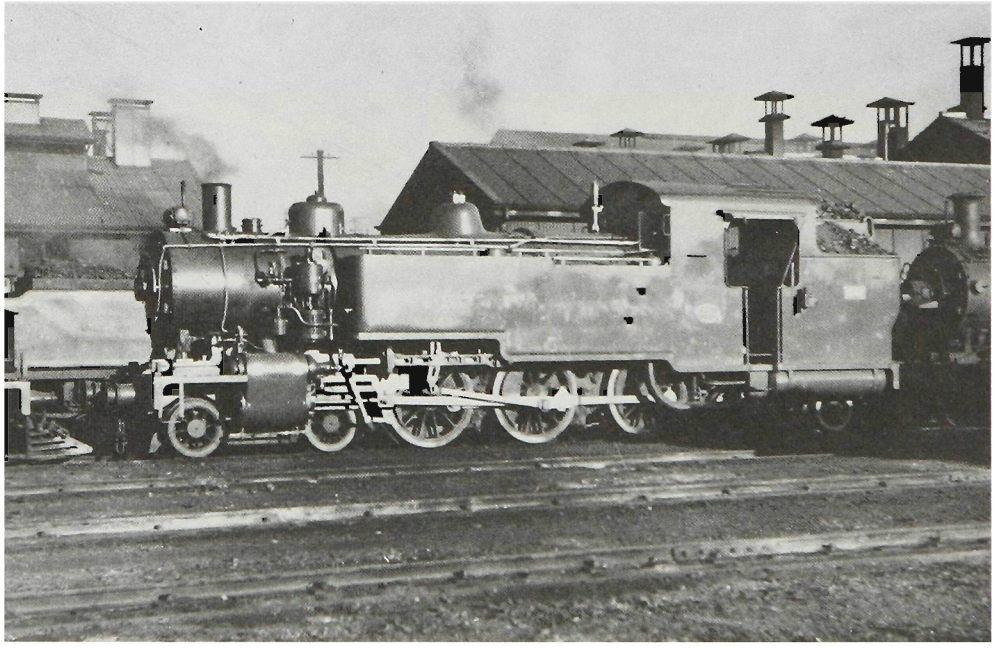
AC16 Class. Baldwin-built "Mikado". Sent from United States with American armed forces during World War II under lend lease arrangement, they were eventually bought outright by Queensland Government. Twenty in all. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



BB18¼ Class. A Queensland post-war type, they were an improved B18¼. Vulcan Foundry, England, built thirty-five in 1950. Walkers, Maryborough, turned out twenty a little later. A roller-bearing job. The last one, No. 1089, was the final steam locomotive to be built in Australia. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



Beyer-Garratt Locomotive, English and French built. Modern design. Thirty supplied in 1950. They weighed 137 tons (139t) and had a tractive effort of 32,770 lbs. (1st), and could haul 1130 tons (1148t) on a 1 in 20 grade. [Photographic Branch, Queensland Railways]



DD17 Tank Type. For Brisbane suburban work. Last locomotives built at Ipswich Railway Workshops. Several modern features embodied in design. No. 950 was 200th turned out at Ipswich, and was on display at the Queensland Industrial Fair in 1940. [Photograph: K. J. C. Rogers]

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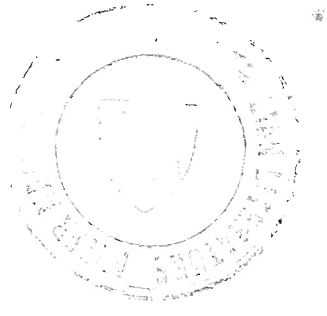

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